

Matthew 7:1-6 (NKJV)

¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged.

² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye?

⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

⁶ Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

Last week I did something unusual. I quoted Jesus words, "**Judge not, that you be not judged.**" and I spent the rest of the sermon teaching how the Bible tells us that we **MUST** judge. I mostly used other scriptures to prove it.

There is some danger to that approach. We must always use great caution when we do something like that. We cannot give the impression that we can use scripture to defend **not doing** what Jesus commands.

But in this case, that was not at all my intention. This is one place where we will learn more about what Jesus is commanding by learning first what He **cannot** mean. And He cannot mean it because Jesus never says anything contrary to the rest of scripture.

So we learned last week that scripture commands us to make judgements. We **must** discern things. We must be able to tell the difference between the true and false. True and false followers, true and false doctrine. The truth is, if we are to survive as humans, we must judge all the time. I just started picking and eating wild mushrooms. Up to this point I am the only one in my family that is enthusiastic about this new hobby. Now it is **essential** when picking mushrooms, if you want to remain in the land of the living, to be very judgmental. So you see what I mean. Judging is an absolute necessity. These words of Jesus are not intended to say that this isn't so.

Now how our culture uses this is filled with irony.

Maybe we speak out about the state of a person who is **choosing to commit something** that the Bible clearly calls **sin**. And we say that if that person does not repent of that sin, that person is damned. Then a person who has been taught the false morality that stems from evolutionary theory and secular humanism looks at us and says this:

Jesus says Judge not that you be not judged.

They say that we are wrong to judge. People should never be judged. “Who are you to judge?” they say.

See the irony here? What must a person **first do** before they tell us that we are wrong to judge people? They must have **first judged us**. They must determine that something we are doing is wrong and that we should stop doing that thing. They must determine that one thing is morally superior to the other. That is judging. In an argument, that should be worthy of a chuckle. But very few in our culture would see the real problem with it.

Our culture’s liberal philosophy teaches that it is perfectly fine to judge. But only **they** get to decide when it is ok and when it is not. Only **they** can tell you when something is wrong and something is not. And when we call something **wrong** that they think is **tolerable**, or even **virtuous**, **they** get to pronounce us as wrong. In fact, that kind of wrong is the greatest wrong in a world that worships tolerance. And they do all of this judging without a speck of authority.

We should never ever let the world interpret the Bible to us. That would be like asking a blind person to describe a sunset. Let them quote it to their heart’s content, but it is a rare person who knows or cares what it means. So I think we have established that **we must** judge. It is a spiritual requirement. And the Greek words do not do us any favors here. The Greek’s use of the word “judge” is as wide as ours is. It means lots of things, depending upon the context.

So let’s focus more on the context.

¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged.

² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

First off, we start with this premise. There will be a judgement done by God at some point. Different theological bents teach different times for God’s judgment of all people. Some say there will be one, some two, some three judgements. It depends on your last days theology.

I believe there will be one. And I believe it will be everyone all at once.

But anyway, Jesus affirms here a **certain judgment**. We are surrounded by people who will face that judgment one day. And that judgment will make the worst day they faced on earth look like a birthday party. They may be absolutely shocked to find out that there is an afterlife and they will spend it in an eternal hell.

In our bantering, and our seeking approval, and considering what we should say and do, how much do we factor in this truth? The person we are speaking

to is going to stand in judgment before God. And if that person does not repent, if they do not fall upon Christ in faith, they will be condemned to hell. Here is another place we must not only believe **upon** God. We must **believe** God. And if we really believe his promises about judgment, it has got to change our urgency about dealing with others.

Now what does this judgment consist of?

Matthew 25:31-46 (NKJV)

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats.

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

His judgment is based on the fact that the people showed an obvious sign of life. They loved their fellow believers.

41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

So my point is that there are two destinations in this judgment. There are those who inherit the kingdom of God. And there are those who are condemned to hell.

So look closely at what Jesus says in our text.

1 "Judge not, that you be not judged.

The context tells us immediately what kind of judging Jesus is talking about. Think about this.

Is there anything a human being can do to avoid **standing in judgment** before God? Will anyone avoid this **gathering** of all human beings for judgment? Is there something that they could **do** or **not do** so they will not have to attend the meeting?

No. A believer need not fear the outcome if He trusts in Christ. But he cannot **avoid attending** the meeting.

What Jesus is talking about in our text is some kind of judging that IS avoidable. If we do A, we avoid B. That is exceedingly helpful. What kind of judging can we avoid?

Let's read the rest of the context.

² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye?

⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

There are three kinds of judgments we can avoid.

We can avoid the **positive outcome** of the **final judgment**- salvation

We can avoid the **condemnation of God** in the final judgment.

We can avoid the **discipline of God** in this life for our presumptuous sins.

We will start with the first. This can't be what Jesus was talking about. He would never tell someone to try to avoid His salvation.

So we move to the next.

We can avoid the condemnation of God in the final judgment.

Let's look at how that fits the context. Is that what Jesus is talking about?

OK so let's assume when we use the word Judge, we replace it with the word Condemn.

Condemn not that you be not condemned.

For with the condemnation you condemn, you will be condemned. And with the measure you condemn, it will be measured back to you.

Then it goes on to talking about body life and ministering to one another.

Frankly I don't think this interpretation makes sense. This is what I always remember saying I think it means. But I think I was wrong. I think it is more complicated than simple condemnation.

Because it does not make sense, first that God would condemn His people. We have been assuming throughout this study that Jesus is addressing the beatitudes people.

Secondly, everything in our text seems to be about **degrees of judgment** and **types** of judgment. I do not think this is talking about degrees of hell a person will get depending upon how badly he condemns others. Do you see what I mean? Could it really mean with the condemnation to hell you give to others, that is the condemnation to hell you will receive. No more and no less.

No. I don't think that makes sense.

Well if that does not make sense, let's take a look at another interpretation.

Let's look at the third kind of judgment we can avoid. We can avoid the discipline of God for our presumptuous sins.

After looking at the next text, I am wondering if this next text of Paul's is not a **direct application** of Jesus's sermon on the mount.

Let's look at Paul's directions for the Lord's supper. Mark read it to us a couple of weeks ago.

1 Corinthians 11:28-32 (NKJV)

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Here we see a clear example of the kind of judging we can avoid by making changes in our behavior. If we were to discern our own sins and repent of them and avoid them, we could avoid being disciplined for them. We can avoid being judged for those **wrong things** if we will do the **right things**. This text clearly refers to those disciplines by God in our lives as the result of judgments of **His**. We are not left to wonder if we can apply the word "judge" to God's disciplines in this life.

Clearly in the Corinthians text, the judgment God does there is not the eternal kind. And look at what the effect is **intended to create** if God judges us now. His judgment of us now by inflicting **discipline** is to cause us to **avoid being condemned** with the rest of the unbelieving world in God's final judgment. He judges our sin with **discipline now** so He does not need to **condemn us** in His judgment later.

And look what the sin is in Paul's text. The sin he points out is in **not discerning** the Lord's body. In fact this same Greek word is interpreted as **judging** 3 times. Paul is saying by **wrongly judging the body of Christ**, we are receiving the judgment of God. Is that not **exactly** what Jesus is saying in the sermon on the mount. Jesus is saying don't judge other brothers wrongly so you do not get judged by God in an effort to make you stop. Paul is saying the same thing.

Does this look just like Matt 7 to you?

Let's look at Paul's text again.

1 Corinthians 11:28-32 (NKJV)

28 But let a man examine himself, (let a man rationally judge his own actions, let him judge himself and the reasons for what he says and does.) and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

(Let him eat and drink **after he judges himself** especially regarding the body of Christ, the family of believers around him, AS he eats and drinks. Was that not the problem Paul was addressing? Even as these people were eating and drinking, they were treating their brothers and judging their brothers wrongly. Some were drunk and full while others went hungry.)

29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner

(Note here what the unworthy manner is. It is eating and drinking without judging, without considering the good of the body.)

eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

(OK by eating without judging correctly they get judged by Christ. One could say here, do not judge wrongly, or fail to judge correctly, or you will BE judged for that which you are wrongly judging.

And what is the judgment? Damnation?)

30 For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

(This is not damnation. This is discipline for their sin of a **failure to judge properly**, for failing to discern the body of Christ properly.)

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

(We see here that this judgment could be avoided. If we did A we would avoid B. So it fits Christ's text in Matthew.)

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

(This seals the deal. We are told specifically that this judging in the here and now is truly called Judging. But it is clearly discipline and not condemnation.)

Now if Paul is talking about the same thing that Jesus is talking about, what we would expect to come next in the conversation is how we are to deal with fellow believers. How we should treat them.

And that is exactly what happens in Corinthians.

Now look how Christ continues in our text-

3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye?

5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

This clarifies what kind of improper judging Christ is talking about. He is clarifying the kind of judging **we should not be doing**. What can we conclude Christ is talking about when we look at this portion of the text.

He is saying Do not do this kind of judging. In order for us to obey Him here we must be able to **define** what judging we **should not do**.

So what is it?

First, the judger has a plank in their eye. Obviously this is not literal. A plank would not fit in someone's eye. This is a figurative reference to a very serious fault. There is something seriously wrong with him.

And look at the word before this. Hypocrite. Now remember that a hypocrite is **play acting**. He is acting like he is one thing when he is really something else.

If a person is acting like they do not have a fault, if they are play acting, we have to assume they have **some knowledge** of their fault. But they are not about to confess it or acknowledge it.

An ignorant person isn't play acting. They are just ignorant. **Hypocrisy** requires **knowledge**. This person knows they are different than what they are conveying.

Ok let's put this together.

We have a person who knows they have very serious faults, yet they are saying, let me minister to your tiny flaw.

Verse 3 gives us a great deal of insight.

why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

The question here is one of motive. What **motivates you** to focus on this person's **tiny sin** while you choose to act like you **have none**? Why don't you begin to do serious business with that stuff inside you that **really really needs dealt with**? What are you trying to pull here? What is the **game** here. This is clearly not driven by **true spirituality**.

When a believer is living by the Spirit, confession and repentance are high on the list. On the first indication of sin, we confess. We repent. And turning from that sin takes highest priority in our lives. While we certainly will not reveal it to **everyone**, our goal will not be to **hide it from everyone** like this guy is doing.

So what we have here is **postured spirituality, postured superiority**. This person is judging others from a position of **superior spirituality**. And I think that is the problem.

Now what will a ministry be like from a person who postures that they have no faults? Won't it be exactly like the Pharisees? They demanded perfection but would not lend a finger to help others do better. They would just lay heavier and heavier burdens on people.

And they would evaluate everyone on some kind of standard of performance. They determine their fellow believers are worthy of being accepted if they perform to a certain level. If they **fail**, they deserve rejection.

Now what happens if God begins to **judge us** using the same standard being described here? What if God starts disciplining us for every failure in our Christian life. What if His fellowship begins being completely cut off based on our flaws and failures.

One thing is for sure. **WE DO NOT WANT TO BE TREATED LIKE THAT.**

If we are rejecting people's fellowship who are honestly trying to live the Christian life but are having a hard time of it, we had better watch out. Christ here is saying He will do the same kind of thing. And we do not want that kind of treatment from Him.

We want grace. We should always want grace. We do not want to be accepted or rejected based on our performance, based on not having any splinters in our eyes.

If we are judging people, **rejecting people, because of their faults**, we do not want God to respond in kind. We do not want God to treat us based on those rules, those standards.

I believe that is the heart of what Jesus is saying.

I think the judging Christ is warning us about is the judging of another's worth based on their performance. Splinter free people are of great worth. Splinter full people can be rejected and disregarded. And all of that judging is coming from a person who will **not tell the truth about him or her self** so the grace to **cover that sin** will never be experienced.

It is like the judging of the pharisee that prayed, I thank you that I am not like that tax collector. And not like the judging done by the tax collector when he says, Father forgive me because I am THE sinner.

The issue here is never about condemning a true **splinter removing** ministry. We all have that toward each other. We **owe it** to each other. Really, how could we not help someone with painful splinters. We would want someone to help us. We certainly should not avoid it due to this passage. This passage is not as much about **activity** but **motivation**.

When you and I look at each other, we should judge each other from the goggles of grace. Everyone at the foot of the cross is of equal worth. The worth is the blood of Christ. And we have that, not because we are intrinsically worth it. He **assigned it to us** when He **called us to Himself**.

So maybe today you are doing better spiritually than I am. Maybe you are on a low. Maybe you are failing miserably. Maybe you are doing better than you have ever done before. Maybe you see something very wrong with me.

Maybe I see something very wrong with you. That is all real world. Making judgments about those things is not a problem. To see a splinter that needs removed is not a bad judgment.

But when we look at each other, we must see each other as people worthy of loving because of **brother Jesus**. And we are all at the same place in our complete dependence upon Christ for saving grace. We are all beggars telling others where to find food. To judge differently puts us on a road to having brother Jesus show us a thing or two.

The Corinthians should have seen all of their brothers and sisters as worthy of waiting for, worthy of sharing with, worthy of sacrificing for. That would have been proper judging. Proper discerning. But they did not. They viewed some as having great value and some as having little to no value. And that was costing some of them their lives.

We are going to expand on this more next week, Lord willing. We will talk about judging others through the **lens of the Gospel**. **Proper judging** that corrects this **evil judging**.

Until then, some good questions to ask are, how do we evaluate our brothers and sisters. And why? Do we believe, in any way, that we are **superior** to them **spiritually**? Do we think we are **entitled** to things from God that they are **not** entitled to? Do we see **their sin** somehow more telling about them than **our sin** is about us? Are we using a different standard for them than we do for ourselves?

If we are judging in those ways, with that attitude, we are doing the kind of judging we should repent of. And if we do not repent, we are inviting discipline.

And the good news is, looking at the cross is the remedy. It is simple. All we need to do is start with the understanding that the ground is level at the foot of the cross and we can adjust our thinking to the spiritual reality.