

When We Face Judge Jesus

Matthew 7:1-6

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Jesus sometimes seems confusing and ambiguous.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us not to judge, but is that possible?

Aren't we in a constantly judging what is right and wrong; good or bad?

Don't we have to make some judgments about whether we think people are a threat to our safety?

Don't we read body language and listen to the tone of one's voice and make judgments about a person's mood, friendliness, or intentions?

Don't we have some responsibility to judge the actions of other people and call them out if they are crossing the line, especially if they are treating people unjustly?

Isn't that what Jesus did when he turned over the money changer's tables in the temple and chased out the animals as the traders cheated the poor by charging them high prices for sacrificial animals?

Whenever we go to the polls and vote, aren't we judging the candidates' positions on issues and to some extent the moral and philosophical positions they hold?

Don't we make judgments about who we want to be our close friends, who we want to be our acquaintances, and who we don't want to befriend at all?

Jesus says, "Don't judge, or you too will be judged."

Jesus might have having a little fun with his audience because he continues by saying, "In the same way you judge others, and with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you."
(7:2)

He tells us not to judge but then he concedes that we cannot help judging. Then he gives us an important guideline to use when we judge.

Here is the guideline: Whatever standard we use to judge others, God's going to use that standard to judge us. Wow!

Jesus once told a story about a man who owed millions of dollars to a king. When he couldn't pay back the money, the king ordered that the man, his wife, his children, and everything he owned to be sold so the debt could be paid to back.

But the man fell on his knees and begged the king to be patient and he'd eventually pay him back the money. The king was overcome with pity for the man and forgave him of the entire debt.

As the man went on his way, he ran into a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

Then that man fell on his knees and begged him for more time, but the man would not grant it. He had the debtor arrested put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. I've often wondered how he could repay the debt while he was in prison, but maybe that's the point.

Word of what happened reached the king and the king became very angry because he had forgiven that man of an enormous debt, more than he could ever repay; but when he had an opportunity to work with a man who owed him far less money, he didn't have any mercy on him.

This angered the king. The king called him in and rescinded his blessing and had the man sent to prison, where he suffered until his debt could be paid.

We would do well to hear this story from Matthew 18 and compare it to Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount: "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (7:2)

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the church at Corinth:

"Cheerfully pleasing God is the main thing, and that's what we aim to do, regardless of our conditions. Sooner or later we'll all have to face God, regardless of our conditions. We will appear before Christ and take what's coming to us as a result of our actions, either good or bad.

That keeps us vigilant, you can be sure. It's no light thing to know that we'll all one day stand in that place of Judgment. That's why we work urgently with everyone we meet to get them ready to face God." (2 Cor. 5:9-12 The Message Bible)

The Apostle Paul tells us that we are all going to be judged. Jesus gives us some important information about our day of judgment.

Once as a boy I went to an amusement park and I waited in line for about an hour to ride a roller coaster, but when I got to the front of the line I was told I was too short to ride. The attendant pointed to a sign that indicated how tall one had to be to ride. Although I could reach the mark by standing on my tiptoes, it was his job to judge me too short. I didn't measure up. Other people my same age could ride because they were taller, but I didn't measure up.

The truth is that none of us measure up in God's eyes. We all fall short of God's standard. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

The standard for each of us is Jesus. As long as we use Jesus as the standard, then we all come up short. That is the reason we should be careful how we judge others.

Problems develop when Jesus ceases to become the standard and we replace the standard with others, ourselves, a philosophy, a religion, or some belief system.

Jesus once told the story of two men praying at the temple. One was a very religious man and the other was a tax collector, whom everyone despised because he worked for the Romans and demanded their money.

When the religious man prayed, he noticed that the tax collector was also praying in the temple.

“God,” he said, “I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” (Luke 18:11-12)

The tax collector could not even bring himself to look up to heaven. He was filled with shame. He beat his chest and said, “God have mercy on me, a sinner.” (Ibid.)

The religious man set himself up as the standard. Everyone else fell short of the good life he thought he was living. At least the tax collector could see his own sin.

That is extremely important if we want to receive God’s forgiveness. We must realize that regardless of what kind of life we are living, we fall short of the standard.

That means we are all going to be judged.

Jesus says that we must be careful how we judge others because God will use the same measure to judge us that we use to judge others.

So Jesus says instead of looking around like this religious man was doing and noticing the faults in everyone else, it would do us good to notice the areas of our lives where we are not measuring up to the standard of Jesus.

It is foolish to go around pointing out the specks in the eyes of others when we have logs sticking out of our own eyes.

Jesus is not suggesting we cannot speak out against injustice, violence, dishonesty, wastefulness, abuse, crimes, unfaithfulness, promiscuity, or any number of things.

Jesus is saying that to have a voice and for that voice to be credible, we must tend to our own house. We must start with our own lives laid out before God. For most of us, our house needs some cleaning.

One of Michael Jackson’s better songs was “Man in the Mirror.”

He sang:

I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you want to make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself, and then make a change.

The message of the gospel is that to make that change, we need Jesus within us to make the change from the inside out.

When Jesus says, "Judge not," Jesus realizes that it is our nature to look out, not in.

It is our nature to look at what is wrong with everyone else and if something is wrong with us, we even tend to blame what is wrong with us on someone else.

Instead, Jesus wants us to focus inward. If we each look at our own stuff and clean up our own speech, attitudes, desires, thoughts, motives, and actions, only then will we be in a position to help others that are struggling.

The way we help those that are struggling is not through condemning them; it is through reaching out to them with love, compassion, understanding, listening, and befriending.

Finally, there is this strange command not to give dogs what is sacred or to throw pearls to swine. What is this all about?

We must remember that the teachings of Jesus and the faith we have are not going to be welcomed or appreciated by everyone.

The words "dogs" and "pigs" were derogatory words used for people not of the Jewish faith. Jesus was using words commonly used in his day for people not of the Jewish faith because these were words people used and understood.

This is simply an acknowledgement by Jesus that our efforts to set up faith will not be met with equal favor in all places.

Some people are not going to appreciate our efforts to reach out and befriend, include, love, forgive, embrace, make amends, listen, or understand.

When Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, he told them that if the people will not "welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." (Mark 6:11)

When Jesus stood before Herod, he made no attempt to answer his questions or explain himself? He knew it would not have done any good. And before Pilate, he stood mostly silent.

Sometimes, like Jesus, it is just best to let our lives and our actions speak.

Sometimes, our efforts to speak about matters of faith only enrage people and make matters worse.

Most people are looking for people who genuinely care about them and who accept them for who they are and where they are. They are not looking for religious know-it-alls who pretend to have it all together and a holier-than-thou kind of attitude.

Generally, if you are accepting of others, willing to listen, willing to befriend and begin with people where they are, they will be more open to knowing the God you know.

We love a God who will judge us all but we love a God who loves sinners. Through Jesus, this God gave himself on the cross for sinners.

We were loved long before we come to Christ. If we remember that, then we should judge people with a measure of grace that is wide, with forgiveness that is radical, and with love that is unconditional.

If we do that, not only is there hope for us on Judgment Day, but there is a great testimony we have to give others about the love our God.

So, today, if you were to stand before Judge Jesus, how would He judge you? You should know. He's already told you that he will judge you with the same measure that you are using to judge others.

If you don't like how you are judging others, then there's time to look in the mirror and make that change.

Sermon Notes

Is it possible not to judge?

Do we all end up judging other people?

One day we will all stand in the place of _____ so we must work urgently with everyone we meet to get them ready to face God. (2 Cor. 5:12)

Jesus tells us something very important about judging others: "In the same way you judge others, and with the same _____ you use, it will be _____ to you."

Matthew 7:2

Instead of looking at the faults in everyone else, we would do good to notice the areas of our lives where we do not _____ up to the standard of Jesus.

Why does Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror," have a good message?

We should judge people with a measure of _____ that is wide, with _____ that is radical, and with _____ that is unconditional.