

## Do not judge

Good morning folks my text today is taken from Matt 7:1-5 from the Sermon on the Mount.

*“Do not judge or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

*“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye”*

Corresponding verse from Luke 6:37-38

*“Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

That sounds like pretty clear command from Jesus to ‘Do not judge’ but if we were honest, it is something we all do, very often, perhaps we get a ‘sneaky uncomfortableness’ about it, however it is a common trait in us all, part of our fallen nature and maybe part of the problem is; that we live in a very cynical world, a rebellious world where we are often encouraged to criticise those in authority, to have little respect for those in leadership, the government for instance.

I was reading the other day about some school children who were being encouraged to write to the government by their teachers to get Boris Johnson to resign!

It seems generally our attitudes regarding those around us is in on a ‘hair trigger’ it doesn’t take much to fall into grumbling, being critical and judging others.

And this whole area of ‘Judging’ is also what the Bible says much about. I counted 115 occurrences of the word ‘Judge’ in the New Testament alone; in fact it is a biblical command that is almost as common as ‘do not fear’ and of equal importance as an instruction regarding something Jesus tells us not to do.

So this morning, I don’t want to condemn anyone but I just want to focus in on an a particular area, a trespass, many either consciously or unconsciously fall into ( including me) and by doing so, in reality, it neither does, ourselves or the other person any good at all. My hope is I will be able offer some insights to help us overcome in this area.

So firstly let's be clear hear what Jesus means when He says 'do not Judge' this term judge has a obvious 'legal connotation' it typically refers to making a determination of right or wrong (innocence or guilt), especially to an official or legal standard.

I think we can say, we are very strong on seeing justice done in this country and conversely to see an injustice committed 'rankles with us' as being fundamentally wrong. That should give us a clue about the seriousness of judging something or someone wrongly as we have a whole legal system with magistrates, lawyers, judges, and jury etc to ensure it is carried out impartially and correctly.

And that is the first thing I want to say about 'not judging others' - it's a very serious thing to do so, because you can only judge if you are possession of the full facts and in truth there is only One who has them! James 4:12

*"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbour"*

**But firstly** when we are looking at this whole area of judgement. We have to clarify a number of things; firstly the **context** of our biblical verses are aimed at **those inside the church** *"For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge"?* (Corinthians 5:12)

When I am talking about 'not judging' this morning I am not at all thinking of those outside the church, unbelievers, the world, no certainly not, we should leave that to God. The truth is; you will find, if you look at scripture, it says nothing about judging non Christians, the secular world.

For example in Romans 13 when it talks about those in authority, political leadership, governments and authorities who rule over us. It holds them in high regard, treats them with respect. Rather than judging them or being critical of them **it says submit to them, pray for them.**

Secondly (and we will say more later on this) Jesus is not giving us just a 'blanket statement' here about 'do not judge' an 'anything goes' sort of mentality, what He is saying is: *'first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye'*

In other words when you have resolved the issues in your own life, when you are in a place where you're clear of sin, not being hypocritical, then maybe then and only then, you can see clearly enough to judge the other person. It is like the story of the 'woman caught in adultery' they brought her to Jesus.

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**In John 8:7 .**

He stood up and said to them, *“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”* I guess were all like this but we will see later on that;

Judging someone is both necessary and helpful **when done in a biblical way - but again only for those inside the church.**

**So why does scripture tell us not to judge or to be slow to judge - 2 things;**

**Firstly it** is because so often were not in a position to do so!

Were not in possession of the ‘full facts’ we only see the ‘surface of things’

*“Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly”* (John 7:24).

You may remember the story of David when he was selected by God ahead of his brothers even though they appeared in age and looks ‘better than him’ - regarding one of his brothers it says this;

**1 Samuel 16:7**

*But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.*

So firstly, we don’t see fully what is going on in a person’s life, why they act in that way, their history, their background, we so often make rash judgements based on insufficient or incomplete data.

**Secondly there** is a ‘spiritual law’ that takes place, there are **consequences** when you judge someone - it bounces back on you! *“For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”*

The spiritual law is; ‘you reap what you sow’ (Gal: 6; 7) it’s the same law that says;

*“But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins”* (Matt 6.15).

There is always ‘spiritual consequences’ when you judge someone incorrectly there was a chap I knew years ago, he was a Christian, a landlord of a house I was living in. I didn’t particularly get on with him at the time, he seemed a ‘bit posh’ to me and ‘had it all together’ I judged him.

I am sure that was a factor why we didn’t get on (he probably thought similar things of me as well) It was a case of ‘the measure you use will be measured to you’ but when I consciously tried not to judge him but rather ‘bless him’ our relationship improved.

I don't think you can have a proper relationship with those we judge negatively, there's always a barrier.

Have you trouble in accepting yourself? This may be the area where your judgements are 'bouncing back on you.'

Not judging is another way of letting go of fear and experiencing Love. When we learn not to judge others and totally accept them, and not try to change them - **we can at the same time learn to accept ourselves.**

Let's say a bit about where **we should judge**

When obvious and blatant sin is confirmed, **Christians must lovingly judge Christians.** But in most situations, we must be very slow to judge, exercising great care and restraint. Our sinful flesh as I said earlier has a 'hair-trigger' in readiness to judge others. We must have a healthy suspicion of our own pride, and keep Jesus' words ringing in our ears: "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt 7:1)

Christians should believe the best about each other until evidence (beyond all doubt) to the contrary comes to the surface.

And right judgment is graciously quick to believe innocence, patiently slow to pronounce guilt, quick to bring restoration when it is able and charitably silent if at all possible.

And when in doubt, "judge not."

The truth is; how we judge says far more about us than how we are judged by others.

So what is the way through 'not judging others'?

**Firstly Accept people where they are** as we said earlier we cannot change them anyway and I think one of the keys to this in the 'Kingdom of God' is about understanding our 'roles and responsibilities' - it is helpful regarding 'not judging' to know what our part is and what Gods part is!

As an example of this; we have been going out knocking on people's doors, speaking to people in our community about Jesus. That is our role to go out; to sow seed, but only God can make that seed grow. Its Gods part to 'open peoples heart's' there is nothing we can do about that.

Another example of this in the context of 'not judging' - is understanding what we should focus on, by not judging and 'keeping our nose out others peoples business' is in Ephesians 5 - the part a husband and a wife play in marriage.

The wife has a particular responsibility but so does the husband in marriage but when they take the 'eye of the ball' and cross over into each other's territory, judging the other, there are problems!

The husband is given the responsibility of 'loving his wife' "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*" (Eph 5:25)

And the wife is given the responsibility of loving and ‘submitting to the husband’

But if the one takes their eye off what they supposed to be doing and makes it dependant on the other ‘doing their bit’ it doesn’t work! Stick to your own calling, so often we are distracted by what the other is doing or more frequently not doing!

But God calls us to be faithful in what **we are called to do not what another is doing!**

Romans 14:4 *“Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand”*

The other thing what we judge! **judge behaviour not character** we learnt this on the fic course, they gave this example, if someone has blatantly lied its best not to approach them by saying ‘you’re a liar’ that’s an attack on their character but perhaps a better thing to say is: ‘you don’t usually lie so why did you act like this and lie in this instance’ the moral is, to try where sin is involved, to judge the behaviour not the character.

Thirdly and finally there are some areas that can become ‘strongholds’ in our lives a ‘stronghold’ is something we find very difficult to stop doing, it keeps recurring again and again, it has a hold over us ! If that’s the case we can identify it as a problem, and then find scriptures to counteract the thought pattern and declare every day through a written declaration victory over it.

### Conclusion

So firstly do not judge those outside the church.

Secondly be very reticent to judge anyone unless you have the ‘full information’ and your own heart is right first.

Thirdly beware that whenever you judge incorrectly there are consequences a ‘spiritual law’ and that very same judgement can ‘bounce back on you’ “the measure you use will be measured to you”

Fourthly Christians must lovingly judge Christians. Where sinful behaviour is seen, it can be helpful and put them on the right track, but in most situations, we must be very slow to judge, exercising great care and restraint. And it should be done lovingly and with restoration in mind.

Fifthly focus on ‘outward behaviour’ not ‘character assignation’ remember our goal is to build others up rather than tear them down.

Sixthly focus on yourself, your own role & responsibilities, your own calling, don’t be too concerned what others are doing or not doing, that’s between them and God.

Finally if you think you have an ongoing problem in this area seek prayer and use a ‘stronghold buster’.

Amen