

This morning, we continue our study of Christ's "Sermon on the Mount." Our subject matter is judgment, but not God's. We're going to learn about how there's a right way and there's a wrong way to judge other people and what this has to do with our walk with God and one another.

OPENING PRAYER

MATTHEW 7:1-6: "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. ⁶ "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you."

Jesus said, "**Judge not, that you be not judged.**" We've probably heard other people repeat these words innumerable times. We say it ourselves when we feel uncomfortable with how another person has put us on the spot and called us out for our actions. And then we say something like, "And besides, who are you to talk?!"

But when Jesus said, "**Judge not, that you be not judged,**" he didn't mean that we should never judge. For he continued with explicit instructions about how we should judge, saying "**take the log out of your own eye.... and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.**"

Indeed, Jesus himself often cast judgment on the teachers of the Law for their hypocrisy and sin. He wanted the people to follow his lead, but he warned them, **John 7:24, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."** In other words, don't judge a person because of what you see with your eyes, as in, that man's dressed shabby, therefore he must be a bum. Or, that man is black, therefore he must be a gangster. Or that man is a man! therefore, he must be a

pig! Rather, make your judgments according to the wisdom of God. That's what Jesus meant when he said, **"judge with right judgment."**

Consider the context of Jesus' teaching. When he said, **"Judge not, that you be not judged,"** he wasn't talking about judging the world for its immorality and false ethics. But he was talking to Christians about how we treat fellow Christians, how we should hold one another accountable with **"right judgment."** Now we don't have a problem judging each other behind our backs, but certainly that's not what he had in mind for **"right judgment"!**

Since only God knows a person's heart and mind, **"right judgment"** requires spiritual discernment, which demands that we examine ourselves for our own sin, that we would come to the Cross of Jesus which saves us. This meditation brings us into harmony with the heart and will of God, which is the only place from which we might be prepared to cast judgment on anyone.

As he always did, Jesus used a very vivid picture for us to carry around in our mind's eye that we might understand his teaching in practical terms. He said, **"First remove the log from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."** In the Bible, a **"speck"** can be anything from a leaf to a grain of sand. But a **"log"** is big, as in a beam of wood, as in a plank, such as the planks which were used to build the Cross on which our Lord was crucified.

Contrast the Lord's command with the expectations of the world: When we feel the least bit slighted, we lose our minds and feel like our rights have been trampled on, and that we deserve justice. People who do not know Jesus exact revenge or at least imagine revenge on the people who've wronged them. But this is not how we think.

Rather, when we are wronged, we think about what big jerks we are! We confess our sins and we make amends for our wrong doing. Then and only then do we have the moral authority and spiritual discernment to be telling anyone anything about **"the speck"** in their eye.

St. Paul wrote, **1st Corinthians 5:1-5: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among**

the Gentiles, that a man has his father's wife! I have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

When he said the church should **"deliver such a one to Satan,"** he was saying they must exclude the person from the fellowship, to publicly ex-communicate him, which would be to exclude him from the Lord's Supper.

Paul's purpose was two-fold: First, he wanted the church—the Bride of Christ—to cleanse itself from the sexual impurity, for a bride is pure as she awaits her groom. But he also wanted to bring the man who had sinned to repentance, **"that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."** He wanted the man to be reconciled. That was the goal, the man's salvation and his reconciliation to the church and to the Lord himself. Judgment is never an end in itself.

In the Gospel, Jesus said, **"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."**

There have been several attempts to interpret this passage. For example, some believe this is a warning against offering the Sacraments to unbelievers, who are the **"dogs."** Others think Christian virtues are like **"pearls,"** and that carnal desires are like **"dogs"** and **"swine,"** that Jesus was describing an internal, spiritual struggle with the flesh.

But none of this makes sense in the context of judging one another. Here's an interpretation that actually works: The **"holy things"** are your brothers and sisters in Christ! And the **"pearls"** are also believers, followers of Christ. The **"dogs"** and **"swine"** are the world, the enemies of God. Thus what Jesus was saying was, "Don't be hyper-critical about your brother or sister's behavior in the church, breaking their hearts and driving them out of the fellowship!" **"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine"!**

Friends in Christ, this week let us strive to know the mind and heart of the Lord as we confess our own sins and do his will.

This week let us judge with “**right judgment,**” always striving for reconciliation and wholeness.

And this week let us share this Good New with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.