

WEEK 15 (November 22-28) Sermon on the Mount— “Judging Others”

(Matthew 7:1-6, 12)

Starting the Conversation

“Do not judge.” This often-misinterpreted passage becomes a favorite verse of those who want the unchallenged liberty to do whatever the heart desires. After all, nobody wants to be challenged or confronted in the thoughts, feelings, words, or actions that seem good and preferable to us. Nobody wants to be held accountable to the challenging, and, perhaps, painful process of holy transformation. But Jesus does not give us liberty to do whatever we want to do. Neither does He tell us that it is the loving and gracious thing to let others race forward in self-destructive behavior in the name of “grace” and “love.” What Jesus DOES say is that we are not the ultimate judge of others. We do not make the call on who is in or out of God’s family. We do not decide who faces the consequences of holy judgement and who receives forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Nor do we have the ability to hold others accountable without a loving relationship rooted in the mutual love of God and commitment to His truth. Love requires discernment – wisdom to know how to point the lost to the grace of Jesus and to point His followers to His invitation to a holy life. Neither comes with condemnation, and neither can be given with a heart of pride. Both are rooted in love.

Let’s Read Matthew 7:1-5

Leader: When someone is saved by grace through faith – they receive the same judgement from the Father as Christ does – a perfect record! Both our good works and sins have no impact on our eternal judgement from the Father. But we can work together to flee from our sin to live the abundant life God has given us in Jesus. But that takes the discerning eye of others...

- Why do we often avoid the critiques and observations of our shortcomings from others? What does this reveal about our own hearts and how we view our righteousness? How does God ask us to view our righteousness? Our sins?
 - If you had to receive some hard truth, how would you want someone to share it with you? What sort of relationship would you want to have with them? Let this be a model for how you can (and when/how you should) share hard truth with someone else. (Also reference Proverbs 12:1, Proverbs 27:5-6, Galatians 6:1, Matthew 18:15)
 - Now, how would you NOT want someone to share hard truth with you? Develop a list of “avoids” together.
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Let’s Read Matthew 7:6, 12

Leader: As discussed above, we are allowed and encouraged to use discernment to recognize the character of others. Directly following Jesus’ teaching on how to offer correction in love, He speaks about how we are not to give what is holy to “dogs” and “pigs”. Frankly saying, discern if others are open to the Gospel and respond accordingly. Let’s discuss further...

- First and most important – Jesus speaks of what is holy and our pearls – referring to the Gospel. How would you share the Gospel with someone else? Reminder – this is a safe space to practice and develop this! (1 Peter 3:15)
 - Who do you think Jesus is calling a dog and a pig in this passage? What is He warning believers of?
 - We are encouraged to discern, or judge, if a person is open to the Gospel or not. What are some ways we can discern this practically? What would you do if you believe they are open to the Gospel? What would you do if you believe they are closed off to the Gospel?
 - We see in verse 12, “The Golden Rule” – list out together some of the true desires you have to live a holy life for God and how others could support you by their efforts. Now how can you do one of these for someone else this week?
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Closing—

- For passages such as this one, often the best way we can begin to correct a frequently misunderstood scripture is to offer ourselves up willingly and joyfully into the true application. So, how can you intentionally ask others to point out the specks they see in you? How can you begin to create a safe and gentle culture of loving correction in your home, workplace, friend group, etc., starting with yourself?

- Putting everything together, how does receiving and giving correction in love bring you closer to God? How can this practice of humble correction and radical community of building each other up in kindness create a witness that stands out to the world and stirs up curiosity for God and His church?
- Read John 13:35 – How can you live out of this truth, that our love for each other can be our most powerful witness to the world? How would you define a true love of God and a true love of others – considering the whole of the Sermon on the Mount?

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for Your teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. You call us into a true and radical love of God and of others, turning our upside-down world right side up again. Thank You for inviting us into Your Family Lord – for Your grace and forgiveness. Help us to extend that invitation to others! Help us to receive Your correction Lord, both through Your conviction through Holy Spirit and through the correction from our brothers and sisters. Ultimately, thank You for the true love You have for us, perfectly displayed in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins, and Your invitation into the true and abundant eternal life, starting right now. May we grow in our love of You and of others every day. In Jesus' name. Amen.