

Get a Grip
On Judgmentalism
November 1, 2020

Would you pray with me?

Father in Heaven, that is my request – to be a little more like Jesus and a little less – even a lot less – like me ...

... especially in this crazy time when everything and everyone is so amped up and our emotions are controlling us (instead of the other way around).

I pray that you would use what I say in this message to help bring that about.

Amen.

Good morning everyone, I'm so glad you've joined us whether you're here in the building or watching online.

And if you're joining us for the first time or the first time in a long time, this is the fifth message in our series *Get a Grip: taking control of your emotions so they don't take control of you*.

As I've said several times already in this series, the reason we're talking about this is because I realized back in September that my emotions were out of control.

- I was stressed out.
- I was fearful.
- I was angry
- I was judgmental.
- I was worn out.
- I didn't care anymore
- And I was dissatisfied with everything and everyone.

It was no fun to be me.

And then I looked around and realized it wasn't *just* me. So many of us are being controlled and driven by those same emotions and attitudes, and at a much higher level than ever before.

But nobody wants to live that way, right?

- I don't want to live that way
- You don't want to live that way
- And, most importantly, God doesn't want us to live that way.

What God wants for us and offers to us is a life characterized by the qualities we just sang about ...

... which the Apostle Paul called the "fruit of the Spirit" ... the effect of following Jesus and *Jesus* being in control of your life instead of *your emotions* ...

... which, he wrote ...

... is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
Galatians 5:22 (NET)

And we all *do* want to live that way.

So, to this point in the series we've talked about stress and fear and anger (which was last Sunday).

And if you missed any of those messages, I encourage you to go the media section of our app and website and watch, listen to, or read the script of the message.

And if you know someone who is currently struggling with any of those issues, send them the link because it will help them, too.

But, today, we're going to talk about *judgmentalism* which, for me personally, is right up there with anger as the emotion that I've been struggling with the most. I mean, they're neck and neck.

And that really bothers me because I get why anger is more of an issue for me now than it usually is. I've always been something of a hothead. It's natural to my personality as a dominant D on the DISC profile.

But one of the amazing things that's happened to me over many years of following Jesus is an increase ...

- In my love for others ...
- In my patience with others ...
- And in my kindness and gentleness towards others ...

... to a level that's *not* natural to my personality.

Now, that doesn't mean I'm *great* at those things; just there's been real growth in those characteristics.

But, in recent days, I've been regressing. I'm definitely *not* "feeling the love."

And I'm not feeling much patience, kindness, and gentleness towards people that I believe ... are *wrong* ...

- About who should and should not be president
- About which political party does and does not have the policies that will best lead to full-human flourishing.
- About coronavirus and what should and should not be done
- About the true nature of our country – whether we're the greatest ever or systemically flawed

Instead, I'm being judgmental towards them. Maybe not *overtly* – I'm not posting on FB or anything like that, but, internally, that's what's going on in me.

Now, I need to tell you that I debated being this transparent with you because this is the kind of thing that some people take the wrong way when a pastor says it.

But I decided to do it anyway because *I know that you're in the same boat*. I know that what's going in me right now *is going on in you, too*.

And it's probably going to get worse this next week after the election when your candidates and your party doesn't win, regardless of who it is.

And if they *do* win, you're going to be judgmental towards those whiners whose candidates and party lost.

... which is why we're talking about this today.

The J-Word

So, let's start out by defining exactly what we mean by *judgmentalism*.

And I suppose the first thing I should say is that, technically speaking, judgmentalism is more of an attitude than an emotion. It's more of a response; a choice we make *in response* to a *set* of emotions which includes anger, fear, and contempt.

In any case, as far as a definition, there are many ways to define what we mean by judgmentalism, but I like

this simple one.

Judgmentalism is an eagerness to find fault with *others*, coupled with a *resistance* to finding fault with *yourself*.ⁱ

A judgmental person is anxious to seek out where others are falling short so they can then label them and call them out and maybe even worse ...

... while at the same time being disinclined to look at themselves in the same manner and to see themselves as deserving of the same penalty they would inflict on others.

Do you know anybody like that?

Ever been on the receiving end of that kind of behavior?

One of the most vivid illustrations of judgmentalism I've ever come across is the Old Testament story of "David and Bathsheba" – actually, what happens *after* the part of the story that most people are familiar with. I mean, most people know the *beginning* of the story but very few are aware of the *ending*.ⁱⁱ

The *beginning* of the story is that David – who was king over Israel at the time ...

- Spotted Bathsheba one evening ...
- Ordered that she to be brought to his quarters where he had sex with her ...
- And she became pregnant.

And, as bad as that was, it turns out that Bathsheba was married.

And not only was Bathsheba married, her husband was one of the most loyal and respected soldiers in David's army – a man by the name of Uriah, who, at the time, was away on active duty.

Hoping to provide some cover for what he had done, David ordered Uriah to return home, thinking that he would sleep with Bathsheba, and therefore conclude that the baby was his when she began to show.

Unfortunately for David, Uriah had such a strong sense of honor and duty that he *refused* to sleep inside his home ... with his wife ... while his men were sleeping on the battlefield ...

... which meant David's plan wouldn't work.

So, he came up with another one. A horribly evil one.

The next day David sent Uriah back to the battlefield with a secret handwritten message to deliver to the general. The message read "place Uriah on the front line and then pull everyone else back."

And that's what happened. Uriah was killed in battle and David took Bathsheba as his wife.

That's the part of the story that most of us know.

But here's the rest of the story. And it so vividly illustrates how judgmentalism works.

Months later, after Bathsheba's baby was born, the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to talk to David.

And Nathan said, "David, since you're the king and you're in charge of justice in the land, you need to know about something terrible that's happened."

"There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor.

"The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought.

"He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man's own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter.

"One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man ...

"... who, remember, David, had more lambs than he could count."

"But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, [the rich man] took the poor man's lamb ...

"David, he literally stole it from him."

"... and killed it and prepared it for his guest." 2 Samuel 12:4 (NLT)

The Bible says that ...

David burned with anger against the man. 2 Samuel 12:5 (NLT)

He was furious. He was enraged at the horrible injustice that had been done.

And he said to the prophet ...

And said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives ...

... which is like, the ultimate swearing in those days ...

"By God," David said ...

*"... the man who did this must die!"
2 Samuel 12:5 (NLT)*

Wow! David was hot. He was amped up.

But he wasn't finished.

“And on top of that,” David continued ...

“He must pay for that lamb four times over ...

“I know it won't make up for the loss, but take four lambs from *his* flock and give it to the poor man ...

... because he did such a thing and had no pity.” 2 Samuel 12:6 (NLT)

But then, comes the awful punch line of Nathan's story.

Then Nathan said to David ...

“You are that man!” 2 Samuel 12:7 (NLT)

“Because that's what you've done to Uriah.”

“God has given you everything you ever wanted. And he would have given you even more had you asked. And yet, you took no pity on Uriah. You took his *wife* and then you took his *life*.”

“You are that man.”

And then Nathan goes on to describe the punishment that David will receive – which will be terrible trouble in his home and in his family for the rest of his life.

But what I want you to see is the lightning quick speed with which David condemns the imaginary “rich man” and the complete and utter blindness to the same exact behavior in himself.

That's what judgmentalism is. That's what it looks like. That's how it works.

Again, judgmentalism is an eagerness to find fault with *others*, coupled with a *resistance* to finding fault with *yourself*.

... and to see yourself as deserving of the same penalty.

Jesus on Judging

... which is one of the reasons why, in what Christians call “The Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus made a statement that pretty much everyone in the world is aware of.

Whether a person is a Christian or not, whether they are “religious” or not, pretty much everyone in the world knows that ...

Jesus said ...

"Do not judge."

Matthew 7:1 (NIV)

I mean, how many times have you heard someone with no spiritual inclination whatsoever say "well, you know what Jesus said: 'judge not lest ye be judged.'"

(They always quote it in the King James version).

... which by the way, is pretty telling about the influence of Jesus even 2,000 years after his time on this earth. And as I say pretty regularly, the only reason we even know what Jesus said Because < >

In any case, Jesus said to his followers, "Do not judge."

Now, what Jesus *actually* meant when He said that and what most people *think* He meant when He said that are two very different things.

Most people think Jesus was saying that you shouldn't have an opinion as to whether someone else is right or wrong, wise or foolish in their beliefs and behaviors.

... which, ironically, then serves as kind of a "gotcha" for Christians.

See, Christians *know* for a fact that some things *really* are right, and some are wrong. And some things really are wise, and some are foolish.

And we know that because God has told us.

So, when someone tells us that "Jesus said not to judge" we get confused. We don't know how to respond or what to say. It's kind of like the ultimate spiritual checkmate. It just shuts down any further discussion or conversation.

But the truth of the matter is that Jesus often made judgements about people and their beliefs and behaviors.

For example:

- He said the Pharisees – the religious leaders of his day – were like white-washed tombs. They looked clean and pretty on the outside but, on the inside, they were full of rotting flesh and bones.
- He called Herod – the Roman appointed ruler over Judea where he lived – a deceitful and dangerous fox.
- He said the disciples were foolish and dumb for allowing themselves to be guided by their fear instead

of their faith (and we talked about that in the message two weeks ago).

- At one point, he even accused Peter of colluding with Satan!

And none of these were trivial statements. They were a big deal when Jesus said them. They caused a lot of consternation.

Of course, we could argue that Jesus had the *right* to pass judgment on people because He's God and we're not.

Except for the fact that He also told His followers things like ...

- Beware of false prophets who appear to be sheep but are really wolves.
- Don't cast your pearls before swine (and he wasn't talking about literal pigs) or they will turn on you and trample you.
- When someone sins against you, go confront them one-on-one face-to-face.

And it's impossible to do those things without ...

- Attempting to evaluate what a teacher is teaching and why they're teaching it.
- Or attempting to discern whether or not a person is worth what we're thinking of investing in them.
- Or judging someone's behavior as being sinful.

And forget Jesus for a minute. Let's just think about real life. Let's think about the election.

- How can you vote without attempting to evaluate a candidate?
- How can you vote without judging their policies and platform as good or bad, wise or foolish?
- How can you vote without weighing the importance of the candidate versus their platform?

I mean, you can't even go to a restaurant without doing those kinds of things.

You can't hire someone or promote someone or give someone a raise without judging them.

So, what is Jesus getting at when He says, "do not judge?"

He simply can't mean what most people think He means.

To make sense of what Jesus is saying here (and we're going to go a little further into what He actually said in just a minute) ...

To make sense of what Jesus is saying, you have to remember that these words didn't just fall from the sky. There is a context. There is something going on when He says it.

This is part of the "Sermon on the Mount."

And one of Jesus' goals in that sermon is to draw a contrast between what the religious leaders of His day called "righteousness" and what righteousness truly is.

And He literally gives examples of that. Again and again, Jesus says, "They say it's like this. But I tell you, it's like this."

And what did those leaders – the scribes and the Pharisees – do when it came to the faults of others? ⁱⁱⁱ

They were eager to point them out. They were harsh in how they responded.

And they were disinclined to look at themselves in the same manner and consider themselves as deserving of the same penalty they would inflict on others.

They didn't just *judge*. They were *judgmental*.

So, when Jesus said "do not judge" that's what He was talking about.

- He wasn't saying "don't have opinions and strongly-held convictions."
- He wasn't saying "don't make an assessment of what's right and wrong, wise and foolish."

What he was saying was "don't be *judgmental*. Don't be anxious to catch others falling short so you can then label them and denigrate them like the Pharisees."

But let's just be honest here, friends: *that is exactly what a lot of us are doing these days, isn't it?*

- We watch our favorite news channel
- We listen to our favorite podcast
- We read our favorite blog or website

... because we're anxious to hear how "they" ...

- Those idiot Trump supporters ... or those idiot Biden supporters
- Those stupid mask wearers ... or mask "objectors"
- Those ridiculous people who think schools should be closed ... or people who think they should stay open ...

All of them are evil and need to be silenced or stopped because they're destroying the country.

And it's more than just individuals. The whole world is going this way. It's why "cancel culture" exists and has so much power.

I mean, it's not news anymore that you have to be careful of what you post on FB or Twitter or Instagram these days. If you don't measure up to what Big Tech defines as "righteousness," you will be labeled and denigrated and literally locked out.

Our cultural system can be just as judgmental as the most critical and cruel Pharisee of Jesus' day, which means that this isn't a religious thing or a Christian thing. This is a "thing" thing. It's an everyone thing.

And unless we start to get a grip on this, we're going to destroy ourselves and everyone else around us.

Solution Side

So, how do we do that?

How do we get control of judgmentalism so that it doesn't take control of us and turn us into the kind of person no one likes; the kind of person *we ourselves* don't like?

Three things that have been helpful to me over the years ... and three things I obviously need to give more attention to these days. Maybe they'll be helpful to you, too.

1. The first one is to recognize the "spiritual boomerang" principle.

You know how a boomerang works, right? You throw it out there and it comes right back at you.

According to Jesus, the same thing happens when we're judgmental towards others.

"Do not judge," He said ...

"... or you, too, will be judged.

"For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Matthew 6:1-2 (NIV)

Now, some people think Jesus might have been talking about “eternal judgement” in this statement but that’s not the context. This is about what happens right now, in this life, in our relationships.

And Jesus is saying that if you’re a person who is constantly looking for fault in others, constantly wanting to hold them accountable for their failures, that’s what you’re eventually going to get. That’s what’s coming back to you at some point. That’s the boomerang.

And we’ve all seen this right? Who is it that gets judged and condemned most harshly in the public eye?

It’s the people who are “moral crusaders” of some kind (whether it’s biblical or cultural or political) who themselves have a moral failure in whatever area they’ve been crusading.

Jesus is saying that’s just how it works.^{iv} If you’re a judgmental person and then you fail in some way, people will be just as anxious to rake you over the coals – and to do it with glee.

But it also works the other way because, Jesus says, you *could* measure things differently.

Instead of being harsh and judgmental ...

- You *could* choose to be gracious and longsuffering towards people.
- Your default posture towards people *could* be to give them the benefit of the doubt.
- To assume the best about them instead of assuming the worst.
- To forgive their sins instead of demanding a pound of flesh.

And that will eventually boomerang, too.^v Maybe not right away but, over time, God promises that will happen as well.

So, that’s the first thing that I think helps us to overcome judgmentalism – to recognize the spiritual boomerang principle in both its negative and positive applications; to recognize that way you deal with the failures of others is coming back to you.

That’s how God designed it.

The second thing that helps is to ...

2. Intentionally look for and own up to *your* sins.

And if you don’t know what they are, just ask someone who has to live with you or work with you. I’m sure they’ll be happy to let you know.

I say that somewhat sarcastically but also somewhat *seriously* because judgmental people are, as we have

seen, disinclined to evaluate themselves in the same way they do others.

Specifically, they typically measure others based on the *impact* of their actions while evaluating themselves on the *intention* of their action.

Judgmentalism says that when you mess up, it's because you're a bad person.

"You were driving too fast and you cut me off because you're just a bad driver. You're selfish and inconsiderate."

But when I mess up, it's because I had a good reason (because, after all, I'm a good person).

"I was driving too fast and I cut you off because I was running late for work. My kid was sick. and I had to go get them at school. I had a good reason for what I did."

Jesus understood that ...

... which is why He continued:

"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?"
Matthew 7:3 (NIV)

"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?"
Matthew 7:4 (NIV)

"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."
Matthew 7:5 (NIV)

The problem of judgmentalism is so severe that Jesus has to be equally severe.

"You hypocrite! Be as intentional about looking for and owning your own sins as you are about looking for everyone else's!

"Be as concerned and burdened about your offenses as you are everyone else's! Hate your sin as much as you hate theirs because *your* sins are as offensive to *God* as *theirs* are to *you*."

Wow.

And the result of that – of intentionally looking for and owning up to your own sins – if you really do it, is that ...

- You will see that you're really no better than anyone else. You might be better in certain areas but in other areas, you're a mess.
- And you will also see that you are a sinner in need of a savior just as much as anyone else.

... which leads to the third and maybe most powerful antidote to judgmentalism, which is to ...

3. Remind yourself of the grace you have been given in Christ.

Remind yourself that even though you deserved judgment, God has made a way for you to escape it because Jesus took all of your sins on himself when He went to the cross.

How does that help?

There's a fascinating story and an amazing scene that I think explains it best. Luke tells us ...

One of the Pharisees [a man by the name of Simon] asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat.

When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume.

We don't know who she is but, obviously this is someone who had been impacted by Jesus in some way. Maybe it was the woman caught in adultery who was about to be stoned. No one knows for sure.

Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair.

Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

When [Simon] saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"

Obviously, Simon – like the rest of the Pharisees – is extremely judgmental.

Then Jesus answered his thoughts.

Wow, that's scary!

"Simon," he said to the Pharisee, "I have something to say to you."

"Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied. Luke 7:36-40 (NLT)

Then Jesus told him this story:

"A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. But neither of them could repay him ...

"... so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts.

"Who do you suppose loved him more after that?" Luke 7:41-42 (NLT)

Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt."

"That's right," Jesus said. Luke 7:43 (NLT)

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here.

"When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

"You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet.

"You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume." Luke 7:44-46 (NLT)

So, why did she do all of these things?

Why did this "immoral woman" treat Jesus with such astounding affection? And why did Simon not?

Why was her heart so open and generous while Simon's was closed and stingy?

Jesus explains:

"I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love.

"But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." Luke 7:47 (NLT)

That was the difference between Simon – who thought he was perfect – and this woman – who knew she was not.

Simon didn't understand his need for a savior and therefore, he could not appreciate the grace of God. The woman did. She knew she was a sinner and that Jesus had treated her better than she deserved, which is what grace is.

And that grace within her naturally – or should I say supernaturally overflowed – to whoever was around her.

That's why it's so important, if you're a Christian, to never stop reminding yourself of the grace you have been given because the more we internalize that reality, the more we are able to do the share it with the sinners around us.^{vi}

Communion

So, those are three things that will help you – and me – get a grip on our judgmentalism.

- *Recognize the spiritual boomerang principle* – you and I get to choose how people will treat us based on how we treat them. The kind of judgement you put on others is coming back to you.

- *Intentionally look for and own up to your sins.*
- *Regularly remind yourself of the grace you have been given.*

One of the ways that Christians do that is through what we call communion ...

So, in the next few minutes ...

- Our band is going to do a song and while they do, go ahead and take the bread and juice.
- Then after that, they're going to invite you to stand and mask up and join in singing a worship song together.
- And then I'll be back to make a few closing comments.

Endnotes

ⁱ Definition found at <http://www.gracebaptist.ws/sermons/notes/respectablesins/sins15.html>

ⁱⁱ Example found at <https://jackvanrooyen.com/curing-the-judgmental-heart/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Great observation from <http://www.gracebaptist.ws/sermons/notes/respectablesins/sins15.html>

^{iv} <https://southfellowship.org/sermon-on-the-mount-gavels-and-flashlights-matthew-71-6-week-11/>

^v <https://jackvanrooyen.com/curing-the-judgmental-heart/>

^{vi} See <https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/daily-reflection/how-can-i-forgive-someone-who-has-deeply-hurt-me>