

Reading: Matthew 7:1-6

Theme: The Jesus Principle Expanded.

Last week we noted chapter 7 is part of the Sermon on the Mount and has the theme of judgement interwoven throughout it. We started looking at v1-6 and saw they can be divided into 2 unequal sections – **A. The Principle Given (v1a)** – where we noted Jesus’ pattern of teaching things, especially in the Sermon on the Mount - where He gives a principle, then He would go on to enlarge upon it, give reasons as to why it is a right principle.

The principle He gave here was *“Do not judge”*. We noted it does not exclude the use of our faculties to test a thing as right or wrong, true or false, good or evil; nor does it exclude civil or church government, judgements or punishments. We saw this principle prohibits, disallows, self-righteous hypercriticising and condemning judgements upon others - often based on personalities, personal differences, even cultural differences or preferences. We saw some of the ways this condemning, hypercriticising spirit is revealed. That then was the principle looked at in a bit more detail, but we move on to look at what the Lord Jesus says and see:

B. The Principle Enlarged Upon. (v1b-6)

This is a great, right principle - no harsh hypercriticising condemning and intolerant judgements. The Lord Jesus gives us reasons why this principle is to be reinforced and underlined in our lives. Why then is this inclination to discover and severely condemn faults and failings (*real or imaginary*) in others prohibited? I’ve noted 4 main reasons here in these verses - solemn and serious reasons which may make us feel uncomfortable - they do me!

1. Our Judgement Exposes Us to Judgement by God. (v1b)

Some have taken v1b to mean *“if you judge others then they will judge you.”* They see it that if you are always criticising, then you are not to be surprised if people turn the spotlight on you. The principle and practice are so often true - people get back what they give, but often they do not like such!

Yet it means more than that here. Jesus is addressing His disciples and He wants them to be aware of God’s eye upon them - as Father and yet also as Judge - remember the passage deals with the theme of God’s judgement. So, it means not only will these hypercriticising believers be judged by men, but also by God. You might be thinking *“Hold on, if we are a Christian then there is no condemnation, no judgement”*. Yes, that is true, there is no

punitive-retribution-Judgement, but the Bible makes it clear that God's people are still subject to a judgement with a small "j". The Bible speaks of a final and eternal Judgement Day when everyone's final eternity will be confirmed. God's people confirmed to heaven and those who never believed in the Lord Jesus confirmed to hell. This judgement is not meant here, as we cannot avert God's justice by being non-judgemental here! We are to consider that Day and ponder where we will be on that Day!

There is also the judgement of God upon His children in this life - because they are His children and He loves them so much He will discipline them. He wants us to live correctly and godly lives. Paul warns of this in 1 Corinthians 11 regarding the Lord's table - we are to examine ourselves so the Lord will not judge us if we eat in an unworthy manner. The idea of God judging and punishing believers in this life as part of His discipline is taught in NT and this judgement can be evidenced in sickness and even death.

That may shock us, but God does not want His name dragged through the mud by His children who stubbornly refuse to respond to His loving discipline and He can judge by correcting us severely. Our God is still the holy God and does not want us to play fast and loose with Him. I must add and reinforce that this will occur in very exceptional circumstances and we dare not presume any sudden deaths or severe sicknesses of believers are due to judgement on unrepented sin – we are in a fallen world and all subject to the effects of the curse on Creation. We are to note and remember we live our lives, both our private and public lives, in God's gaze and He will judge our sins for our benefit - as individuals and as a church, because He loves us.

There is also a 3rd judgement in Scripture, that of rewards. It will not affect our place in or our delight of heaven, or our joy, nor will it spoil heaven one little bit, but we will all appear before the judgement seat of Christ and our works be made manifest as to what we have built upon the foundation of Christ and His work (Romans 14:10ff; 1 Corinthians 3:11ff; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 and Revelation 14:13 says our works follow us).

The latter 2 judgements, especially the last, is what I feel are being referred to here. We expose ourselves to God's judgement for He knows our attitudes, our reasons, our motives and we will have to answer in eternity, maybe in time for such. It does not affect our salvation, but it does affect our blessings, benefits now and even in eternity as we will be judged and not have rewards.

2. Our Own Judging Sets the Standard for the Judgement upon Us. (v2)

This is not only from others - if we demand high and precise standards from others, then they will expect such from us and judge us according to our own standards. It is also true of the Lord. If we claim great knowledge, great experiences, then we will be judged according to such. In Luke 12:47-48 we have this principle and it is intimated in Romans 2:1 & James 3:1 - with those who set themselves up in or as an authority, will be judged accordingly. Jesus says this in v2 to all believers.

One commentator termed this “*one of the most alarming statements in the whole of Scripture*”. If we claim, in our judgements to know so much, to be such an authority, to have great knowledge of Scripture, then we are saying that if we do not do what we know, we deserve greater punishment, less rewards, than a person who is ignorant. We set the standard of the Lord judging us by our own words, actions, attitudes and thoughts. If we claim much, then much is required of us. William Hendriksen says “*If you judge without mercy, you will be judged without mercy. Similarly if you judge kindly, you will be judged and treated kindly.*”

This should deter us from the practice of unloving, hypercriticising condemnation and judgement on others. If we have a delight in doing such, then we say to others and to the Lord “*Judge me in the same way!*” Would we really want that? Another reason not to judge others in this way is:

3. We Are Incapable of Judgement. (v3-5)

Here Jesus uses this illustration and it seems a ridiculous picture - one of irony, sarcasm even, certainly humour - to see this one with a beam in his own eye, trying to get out a little speck, mote from someone else's eye! Which one of us would want to be in hospital for a delicate laser eye operation and the specialist doing the operation comes in with his guide dog! We would question the person's ability to do such a delicate operation on such a sensitive part of the body. Yet, here is this one with a beam in his eye claiming to see what's wrong with the other person - it's that speck of sawdust...!

If we have a harsh, condemning, hypercriticising spirit then we are totally unfit to be in a position of judging anyone. The Pharisees felt so fit, ready and able to condemn others as they trusted they were righteous and so condemned others. It appears they had great big beams affecting their ability

to judge correctly. If we are not to be hypocrites, then surely we must deal with the “beam”, the splinters, in our own eyes. Matthew Henry wrote *“Our own sins ought to appear greater to us than the sins of others... The sins of others must be extenuated, but our own aggravated.”* Sadly, we may feel so good and righteous in our own eyes, but if there is no humility, no humbling of our self before God, then God sees the beam of pride, of self-righteousness and it invalidates us for doing “eye surgery” on another!

1st of all, we need to use our hypercriticising condemning spirit upon ourselves and be true judges before we look at others. It is a shame we do not. We may excuse in us what we condemn in others and are unable to give true judgement due to this bias against a person, or personality due to their background etc. If we are not prepared to deal with the beam in our own eye, then we are not really out to help people but are in danger of being hypocrites as Jesus says in **v5**. We would be useless at getting a speck out of someone else’s eye as our own beam gets in the way. We must get rid of self, self-importance, self-opinion, self-authority and our hypercriticising condemning spirit has to go. Compared to such, other people’s sin is a little speck.

Only when we rid ourselves of such a beam of pride and arrogance are we in a fit place to judge. It is an amazing piece of logic - that only when we have seen ourselves correctly are we able to judge others in a right way, for then we come aware of our sin, our failings, coming to the Lord Jesus for help, cleansing, feeling tenderly our weakness and then we can truly and gently help others as we have dealt with ourselves harsher than we’ll do with them.

Are we ready to stop being hypocrites? Are we willing to deal with ourselves before we seek to help others? When we are humble and sensitive to our own weaknesses, failings and sins, then by God’s grace and tenders we can help, can deal gently with someone with a speck in their eye!

Yet, our Lord has not finished. It may have seemed so as v6 is put on its own in some commentaries, the AV puts it as a separate paragraph. The NIV helpfully links it with the 1st 5 verses and personally I feel it is linked, for it is a further reason not to judge:

4. We Need Great Wisdom. (v6)

We are to be so careful in our motives, actions and statements of judgement. Yet, we are **not to be afraid** to make any judgement. While we are not to

judge in a wrong way, there is also a right and proper way, place and time to make judgements - as heresy, error, wrong and evil have to be shown and exposed as such.

We are able, have to exercise mutual discipline and encouragement as Galatians 6:1 says of believers (church officers?) *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”* Gentleness by spiritual people is what is needed and basically this means we need great wisdom to go along with that gentleness as we may have to say strong words but gently spoken.

We are shown that those in error, wrong or evil are not to be endlessly tolerated, Jesus shows in v6 that there will be times when we have to say enough is enough. William Hendriksen speaks of *“dogs and hogs”*! Dogs and hogs speak of those who in Jesus’ day were considered beyond the pale. Dogs were not the nice domestic animals we have today, but were wild scavengers, who howled, who were messy and dirty and were considered contemptible and it was a term used to describe the Gentiles! Hogs, pigs, swine were unclean animals and were also viewed as contemptible.

The Lord Jesus is here saying that we are not to cast holy things, pearls - the truth of the gospel and God’s word - before those, who by their continual actions and reactions, show they are “dogs or hogs”. Anything that is very precious as it stands in relationship to God should not be constantly put before those who will mock and ignore it. Yes, we still proclaim the gospel, but some will mock, joke, ignore the gospel time after time and there will come a time when we can rightly say “enough is enough” and can cease to preach and lay the things of God before them. Is anyone here like this? I need to warn you to be careful that that is not your case - ignoring, trampling the things of God underfoot. (*Brother Andrew and woman at work - shocked her to seek God*)

Obviously, this means we need wisdom - wisdom in approaching different people. We may be able to broach the matter with one person in one way that would not be right or suitable for another person. We see this in the Lord Jesus’ ministry as He did not deal with all people in the same way. Nathaniel was not dealt with as Simon or Nicodemus, or the woman at the well, or even the seeming harsh way that He dealt with the woman of Tyre and Sidon, or the woman with the issue of blood or with Herod or Pilate. The apostles also

approached different peoples with different ways. Yes, in all cases the truth was proclaimed, but the way, the delivery vehicle and method used varied.

We need to learn that each person is an individual and treat them as such as we share God's word with them on an individual basis, as we discern how is the best way to help them. We are to see how best to approach and speak God's word to them. We do not always let fire, or always thrust literature at them or always rattle off some Bible verses. Perhaps we do such to some persons at times, but with others it involves time, patience to be able to best bring God's word to them so that they will have no excuse for not receiving it. Sometimes we have to be winsome to win some! Other times we have to be blunt and forthright. It is the truth of God's word that is to cause offence and not our high-handed manner. We must also learn how best to give God's word - with comfort or rebuke, perhaps encouragement and strengthening.

Here in v6 Jesus is saying "*Be careful and wise*". We are not to cast precious things that will not be wanted or appreciated. As we realise the need of wisdom, it should cause us to hesitate in pronouncing judgements.

We need wisdom in every area of our Christian lives and I pray God would grant it to us as we consider the outworking of this principle in our own lives, so we do not let a hypercritical spirit fester in our heart as it could cause us and others much sadness and loss. I pray we would foster a spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There are no prohibitions against these - as these are the fruit of the Spirit and we are to keep in step with the Spirit for our Lord's glory, honour and to be a true blessing for others.