

Sermon Title: Be Honest
Biblical Text: Matthew 7:1-6
Teaching Series: Kingdom Being
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Matthew 7:1-6

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 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? 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? 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. 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.”

We’ve been studying the Sermon on the Mount. A great crowd has been with Jesus, but he pulls away from it and sits on a hillside. His closest followers join him and he begins teaching. The past few weeks we've look at his instructions about integrity ... in our prayers, giving, and fasting. There’s a way of doing all these spiritual disciplines which is righteous and helpful. A there’s a way which is self-righteous and destructive. Remember, his sermon is all about reframing righteousness around the heart for his listeners.

In Luke 18 Jesus tells a story that puts flesh on all this ...

Two men go to prayer at the temple. One is a Pharisee—a part of the elite religious class. One is a tax-collector—considered corrupt and low member of ancient society. Jesus tells us, *Read Luke 18:11-13 ... "The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'* But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'"

While the tax collector confesses his lack of righteousness, the Pharisee presumes his righteousness. In the language of the Sermon on the Mount, the Pharisee prays and gives and fasts to be seen. The natural course of such a view of himself leads to divine judgment. Jesus says, *Read Luke 18:14 ... "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* What's Jesus saying? Well, it's a great irony. He says, being judgmental leads to divine judgment.

Tupac taught that only God can judge me. But that's not entirely true. Today, in fact, Jesus will describe three different types of judgment—divine, personal, and communal. And they're all connected. You see, knowing that we are and will be judged by God, humbles and empowers us to judge or rightly evaluate ourselves, which in turn helps us to discern our brother and sister's life with integrity. That's what I'd like to talk about today. I want to talk about judgement. All three kinds.

Here's how we'll organize our time ...

- The *nature* of judgment.
- The *purpose* of judgment.
- The *love* of judgment.

[Prayer]

Movement 1: The Nature of Judgment (vv.1-2, 2

Samuel 12:5-6)

It's probably helpful to begin by naming our preconceptions about judgment. For most of us, living in a modern and progressive city like Chicago, judgment is negative. Modern people see judgment as an evil practice which devalues personal autonomy and individuality. *Right?* But because some of us grew up in religious environments we're prone to see judgment as positive. A moral person sees judgment as a necessary discipline that reveals God's holiness and encourages us to live holy lives. *With me?*

So, modern people who esteem love above all else see judgment as the antithesis of tolerance and acceptance. Loving someone means never judging them. But since religious people esteem holiness above all else, they see judgment as the way we hold ourselves and one another accountability. Holiness requires judgment.

So, *does judgment reject love?*

Or, *does judgment produce holiness?*

Jesus seems, as usual, to communicate a third way. It's neither strictly modern nor religious. But it's also not a balance between the two. Look at v.1. ***Read Matthew 7:1-2 ... Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.*** Okay, let's notice this third way. Jesus doesn't say don't judge because it's evil. Nor does he tell us to judge each other because it's good. It's not good or bad. Rather, he says don't judge because however you judge someone, that's the way in which you will be judged. In his book *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis writes about the importance of describing something and resisting the urge to immediately assign value. Instead of saying something is evil or righteous, describing its nature or effect invites us and others into discovery and learning. In other words, we suspend judgment.

That's what Jesus is doing.

He says, judgment is reciprocal.

One of the most instructive stories about the reciprocal nature of judgment is found in 2 Samuel. King David executes a man named Uriah. If you know the story, David seduces Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. And when she became pregnant David's unrepentant sin led to more sin. And he kills Uriah. God calls his prophet, Nathan

to hold David accountable. We might say to deliver divine judgment. But instead of accusing David outright of adultery and murder, Nathan tells him a story about a rich man and a poor man. Essentially, the rich man takes the poor man's only lamb and sacrifices it rather than take one of his many. Here's how David responds.

Read 2 Samuel 12:5–6 ... “Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.’”

What's happening? Well, David is judging this fictional rich man. It's ironic because it's clear Nathan's story is about David. But David is unable to see the folly and sin in his own life and condemns the man to death.

Nathan simply responds, *you are that man*. And death comes to David's house.

You see?

Divine judgment is reciprocal.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' isn't warning his disciples that all judgment is wrong or that all judgement is right. Rather he's describing the nature of judgment. He's saying the way we judge is the way we'll be judged—judgment is reciprocal. However you judge someone, you should be prepared to be judged in the exact same way. So we shouldn't ask, *is judgment good or evil?* Rather, *how do I want to be judged?* Or stated differently, we ought to judge ourselves and others keeping in mind that God is the ultimate and only true judge. Judgement ultimately comes from God.

Well then ... *why would we judge at all?* Well, because judgment keeps us healthy and humble.

Movement 2: The Purpose of Judgment (vv.3-4,5,

Romans 2:1, Psalm 139:19-22,23-24)

David's issue is our issue too. Jesus uses a famous illustration to further describe this deeply human predicament. He asks, *Read Matthew 7:3-4 ... "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? 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?"* Like David we all have an uncanny ability to see the speck, or sin or imperfection or shortcoming, in someone else's life while missing the exact same thing in our own life. Dr. Tim Keller points out that the comparison Jesus makes is not between the sins. It's not that one person has a small sin (speck) and the other person a large sin (plank). After all, anything in my eye is going to look massive to me, *why?* Because it's in my eye. It's a matter of perspective. And so, what Jesus is after here is not a comparison of sins, but an incongruity of expectations and standards. It's a misalignment of the heart.

Jesus is drawing our attention to a person whose eyesight has been seriously corrupted, and yet instead of getting healthy they point out the unhealthiness of others. And by the way I think this person is aware of the plank. Though perhaps subconsciously. After all, more times than not we despise in others what we

despise in ourselves. Nineteenth century German writer Hermann Hesse observed that *“If you hate a person, you hate something in him that is part of yourself. What isn't part of ourselves doesn't disturb us.”* Seems right in line with what Jesus is suggesting. The Apostle Paul echoes the same truth. *Read Romans 2:1 ...* *“Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.”* We notice the specks in others eyes to distract ourselves and others from the speck in our own eyes.

What's the remedy? Well, it's pretty simple. It's so obvious in fact we almost never do it. Look at v.5. *Read Matthew 7:5 ...* *“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.”* Jesus says, before you judge someone else, judge yourself. Before you diagnosis someone else's sin, start your healing. You see, having something in your eye is unhelpful and damaging. But once it's removed, Jesus says, “you can see clearly.” Judging ourselves first, acknowledging and naming the specks in our lives is a practice of getting well. It's a discipline of being authentic and resisting the urge to pretend or be a hypocrite. That's really what this word *judge* means. In the Greek it's the word *krinō*. It means "to sift" or "to split apart." It conveys this idea of evaluation or examination, seeking to determine the nature or substance or goodness of something. And that kind of personal judgment or examination keeps us healthy.

This is perhaps one of the most damaging practices of the American Church today. Instead of being a people of confession and healing ... taking out the specks of our own eye first ... we too often act like a people of judgment, pointing out the sins of others first. We're happy to decry the sexual dysfunction of a progressive culture, but fail to admit and lament our own addictions to worldly ambition, misogyny, money, and fame. We're ready to point the finger at traditionalist who conflate their patriotism with their spirituality, but fail to grieve and confess our love of being seen as cool and accepting and comfortable.

King David was learning this. He was learning to resist the urge to point out the speck in another's eye, first inviting God's Word and Spirit to judge his heart. David wrote the words of this song, meant to be sung by God's people. In other words, what he was learning personally, he was sharing corporately. In it he fantastically demonstrates this wrestling match we all face. Meet me in Psalm 139. David begins with a beautiful introspective reflection like, Where shall I go from your Spirit? The heavens, you're there. The depths, you're there. But then he breaks in with this. Look at v.19. ***Read Psalm 139:19-22 ... Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.*** David wants to kill some more people. Church, this is a song. This is a prayer. Can you imagine showing up to a gathering, oh God kill all these people? David's tone and language shifts so dramatically that many Old Testament scholars debate whether or not Psalm 139

has two authors. The loving shepherd king and some raging psychopath. But I know it's one author. *You know why? Because it's me.* David has just described my weekly prayer life.

David shifts again. Instead of taking action on his judgment and desires for his enemies, he does something deeply instructive and completely in line with Jesus teaching in Matthew 7. Look at v.23. *Read Psalm 139:23-24 ... "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"* In his judgment of his enemies, he considers himself. It's an invitation. David is asking the Lord to examine or sift through the crevasses of his soul ... through the intentions of his heart ... underneath the foundations of his thoughts. He's asking God to show him any and every speck that might be in his eye. But not for his condemnation. He's asking for healing. He's asking for eternal restoration and righteousness.

Here's the point. If judgment is reciprocal, *isn't this the way you'd like to be judged? With integrity? With health? With humility?* You see, contrary to our broad generalizations and common perceptions, this kind of judgment is actually deeply loving.

Movement 3: The Love of Judgment (vv.5-6)

The *nature* of judgment is reciprocal. The *purpose* of judgment is to bring healing. Which leads us to this great *love* we give and receive in judgment.

Perhaps the most unsettling detail of Jesus' instructions is that we still have a responsibility to take the speck out of our brother's eye. Look again at Matthew 7:5. ***Read Matthew 7:5 ... 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.***

Hypocrisy is not about helping a brother with his sin. Hypocrisy is refusing to admit you're a sinner too. The religious person often neglects taking the speck out of their own eye and instead focuses on someone else's problems. We skip to judging others. We know judgment is healing but don't think it's reciprocal. We think judging is good. And while the modern person often deals with their own speck, they just as often ignore the speck in someone else's eye. We don't want to be judgy or judgmental. We think judging is bad. Because we know judgment is reciprocal but wonder if it's actually healing. *You see?* This is Jesus' third way: because God is our ultimate judge, we examine ourselves first and then we help our brothers and sisters.

To be sure, our examination of others has limits. We shouldn't become morality police. We shouldn't constantly seek faults in others. Nor should we constantly try help someone with the specks in their lives when they don't want to listen. Notice how Jesus concludes this passage. ***Read Matthew 7:6 ... "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."*** While this passage is particularly challenging to interpret, it seems most natural to compare and contrast this principle with the previous. You see, while we should help others who have sin in their lives, there are some who will not respond favorably to our observations and care for their life. And in this

case, Jesus seems especially to be thinking about the gospel. The message that is truly holy. The pearl of great price. After all, *doesn't the gospel cosmically point out the speck in all our eyes?* That makes Jesus our brother who sees the speck of sin in our lives, disabling us from being able to see him and the world in truth and beauty. And instead of simply judging us ... instead of disregarding us and not judging us ... he took our judgment.

The cross is the place the love of divine judgment and the healing of divine judgment are put on full display. And though the nature of all judgment is reciprocal, in a very real way it's not. On the cross Jesus allows himself to be judged as guilty even though he had no fault, no sin, and no speck in his eye.