The Unreasonable Jesus - Part Three

# Do Not Judge

# (Matthew 7:1-5)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. I'm excited to be sharing with you part three of our series “The Unreasonable Jesus” as we’ve been looking at some of those seemingly unreasonable statements of Jesus. Statements that challenge us to take it up another level, to go deeper in our walk with Jesus, living out the truth that we claim to believe. And so, as we come to the Word of God today, we are asking, “God, what are you saying to me, what are you doing, and what do you want me to learn?” Because the power of true biblical interpretation is to get into the presence of God and to align your perspective with his so that we have the mind of Christ.

You see, it goes without saying that Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher who ever lived, but what’s really interesting is that the passage of scripture we’re going to look at today is probably the number one most quoted Bible verse by non-Christians. You see, no matter who you are, there’s no better way to tell people to mind their own business than to misquote Jesus. And so, people, even people who don’t believe in the Bible, when they want to silence someone whose opinion they don’t like, they’ll be quick to quote Matthew chapter 7, verse one, telling you that Jesus said,

"Do not judge or you too will be judged” (Matthew 7:1).

This may actually be one of the biggest arguments in our culture today, people who would say “do not judge,” because what they’re really saying is that “you don’t have any right to say something that I’m doing is right or wrong.” And it’s in that argument that you may find yourself trapped, feeling like you need to tolerate every type of behavior, every kind of belief system or else you’ll be judged as well. But is that what Jesus meant when he said that? You know, for some reason that just doesn’t sound right, in fact, it sounds kind of unreasonable.

Having grown up in the 70s, these words of Jesus became something of a mantra for our culture. And yet, while the rest of the world was saying, “If it feels good, do it”, the church was accused of being judgmental by trying to impose their standard of morality on everyone else. But all of this has changed in recent years with the increase of social media and now everyone has a voice, everyone has an opinion, and everyone seems to believe that they’re something of an authority on everything. In fact, it seems as if America’s favorite pastime is to pass judgment on anyone and everyone who doesn’t adhere to your own personal view. And so, if you support the wrong group, have the wrong political opinion, or if you’ve been exposed as having done anything wrong in your life, you can expect to be shamed on social media.

Unfortunately, this judgmental attitude wreaks havoc in our relationships and that’s why Jesus said, “Do not judge.” But what he was really talking about was the human tendency to set ourselves apart as judge, as a higher authority, and to want to play God. You know, to present ourselves as being a little better than everyone else, a little more righteous, and expecting everyone else to meet our standards.

You know, speaking of judges, some of you may remember the name Susan Boyle. Well, today she’s an accomplished professional singer, but when she first appeared on Britain’s Got Talent in 2009, she took everyone including the judges by surprise. When she first walked across the stage, she was rather unimpressive and you never would’ve guessed listening to her talk with her thick Scottish accent that she could sing like she sings. In her opening interview, you can even detect the ridicule and subtle mockery of the judges, but watch the expressions and the response of the people change in this video as she begins to sing.

Video: Susan Boyle's First Audition 'I Dreamed a Dream' | Britain's Got Talent

After this performance, Susan Boyle has gone on to record seven studio albums and has performed all over the world. She is a good reminder as to why we should be careful not to make preliminary judgments on others. And yet, we do it all the time, we judge people by the way they dress, the way they talk, or the kind of car they drive. We judge people by the way their children behave, what type of job they have, or where they live. And so, we all have a tendency to make judgments about others based on nothing more than our perceptions or preconceived ideas. But the truth is that when Jesus says, “Do not judge or you too will be judged” we don’t want to be that person, because number one, we can’t see clearly enough.

## 1. We Can’t See Clearly Enough

You see, we don’t know enough, and so we can’t see clearly enough to pass judgment on anyone. As we consider this passage, for us to understand what Jesus is saying, we must look at the context. In other words, at what Jesus was saying before and after this verse. And what we discover is that in chapter 6, Jesus was calling out the Pharisees, those who were considered the religious elite of that day, and he calls them out for their hypocrisy. He points out their insincerity and their phony religious practices of giving, praying, and fasting. And then, as we begin chapter 7, Jesus says, “Do not judge,” but he’s not saying that we shouldn’t be discerning, he’s talking about hypocrisy, and so he’s telling us to be careful not to be hypocritical. Then he warns us in verse two saying,

“For in the same way you judge others, you (too) will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. "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? 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? (And then Jesus says,) “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 7:2-5).

And so, Jesus is simply continuing the theme of hypocrisy from chapter 6 into chapter 7, and he’s not talking about judging one another, but about our sincerity, our authenticity, and he’s encouraging them and us to evaluate our own lives and our own habits so that we may see clearly enough to have the right to speak into our brother or sister’s life.

There’s an interesting illustration of an astronomer named Percival Lowell who became well known for his theory that canals existed on Mars. In spite of skepticism from the astronomical community, he spent years peering through a giant telescope, mapping the channels and canals that he saw. His studies influenced the writings of science fiction authors such as H.G. Wells, Ray Bradbury and others before being disapproved decades later by NASA's Mariner missions. However, Lowell was convinced that he saw canals that would support life on Mars, and so, how could he have been so mistaken? Well, it’s been suggested that it was the result of his desire to find life on Mars, that’s what he was looking for, and that what he was actually seeing was a reflection of the blood vessels of his own eye in the lens.

In the same way, Jesus cautioned us not to overlook the “plank in our own eye” because often we think we have a clear view of “the speck of sawdust in our brother’s eye” when in fact our vision has been clouded by our own pre-judging or prejudice. And so, when Jesus says, “Do not judge” he was warning about hypocrisy, about picking apart other people’s little faults when you’ve got big issues in your own life. And then number two, Jesus tells us that before you judge anyone else you should take a look at yourself.

## 2. Take A Look at Yourself

And there was a song by Bo Diddley that says just that. Now, some of you may be more familiar with the version by Eric Clapton, but back in 1957 Bo Diddley penned these words. “Before you accuse me, take a look at yourself.” And that’s pretty good advice to follow because we have a tendency to point out the faults in others while ignoring the same faults in ourselves. In fact, the Bible tells us in Romans chapter 2,

“You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?” (Romans 2:21-23).

In other words, “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). Unfortunately, what many people have interpreted this to mean is that Christians shouldn’t speak out against sin or take a stand for righteousness and holiness, but that’s not what Jesus was saying at all. He was just warning us that when it comes to looking at the lives of others, we must first evaluate ourselves, and so he was merely leveling the playing field. You see, we all have the same problem, we’ve all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And yet, we’re all on the same journey, having the same promises, and wanting to purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

However, on the other hand, we must never hold those who are not Christians, who are outside of the family of God, to our own family standards. The apostle Paul said it this way, he said,

“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?” (1 Corinthians 5:12)

In other words, it’s none of our business if they’re not followers of Christ. You know, why would I expect my next-door neighbor’s kids to follow the rules of my family. And in the same way, if someone is outside the family of God, it’s not our place to hold them accountable to God’s standard. But notice what Paul says in the next breath, he says,

“Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you" (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

And so, as believers we’re supposed to help one another, to spur one another on toward good deeds, to show love and to help gently restore people who’ve fallen away; but if someone is outside the family of God it’s not our place to judge them.

Theologian William Barclay wrote that when the Greeks held a particularly important or difficult trial that they would hold it in the dark so that the judge and jury wouldn’t even see the man on trial and possibly be influenced by anything but the facts. And we could learn a lot from that, because we’re all biased, none of us are perfect, we’ve all sinned and fall short of the standard of God, and that’s why James reminds us,

“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you — who are you to judge your neighbor?” (James 4:12).

Again, let me remind you that he’s not forbidding us to exercise discernment or even to evaluate other believers, but we must not act like God in passing judgment on them. We must first examine and evaluate ourselves, removing the plank from our own eye, and then we can try to help others. But we always need to be mindful of the fact that we don’t know all the details, we certainly don’t know the motives that are at work in others hearts. And so, to speak against or to judge our brother or sister on the basis of partial evidence or impure motives is to sin against them and against our God. You see, only God is qualified to judge, because he’s all-knowing, he’s perfect in every way, and therefore, his judgments are just and holy.

The apostle Paul reminds us that, we’re all going to stand before God’s judgment seat (Romans 14:10). And so, we need to remember that because we tend to accuse others and then excuse ourselves. But Jesus warns us against this kind of hypocrisy because when you judge others you could be condemning yourself. And so, we need to be able to deal with our own sins so that we’re not judging someone else for the very thing that we’re doing. And then, number three, you don’t want to criticize unless you’re ready to be part of the solution.

# 3. Be Part of The Solution

This is so important because we often find ourselves gossiping, criticizing, complaining and casting judgment on others instead of coming alongside of them, taking them by the hand and becoming part of the solution. And the reality is that each of us are vulnerable to that temptation, because none of us get it right all the time, but in a spirit of love we need to be willing to help others as well as being open to receiving correction ourselves. This is what the Bible says in Galatians chapter 6, verse 1,

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin…” (Galatians 6:1).

Now, notice the context, he’s talking to brothers and sisters in Christ, and so this is the family of God; these are those in the church whom Paul had told us in first Corinthians chapter 5 that we’re to judge because we agree in our family that God’s Word is the truth.

And so, when the Bible is clear about something, we’re going to live according to God’s Word, but if someone is discovered to be living outside of God’s will, living in a way that’s harmful, hurtful, or destructive, we’re going to call it what it is. Now, we’ve got to acknowledge, that according to worldly standards this isn’t politically correct, but these are our family rules, and we don’t hold those in the world, those outside of the church, outside of our family to our family rules.

And so, Paul says, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin…” Or in other words, if someone that we love is doing something selfish or hateful, if they’re caught in a sin, he says,

“You who are spiritual should restore him gently, but watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

In other words, with the same grace that God has given you, you restore them, you help them get back on the right path, and you do it with gentleness and love. But you’ve got to watch yourself, because the moment you start correcting others, you become vulnerable to pride, the temptation to become judgmental, thinking more highly of yourself than you ought. And so, we need to have wisdom and discernment remembering the words of Jesus,

“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 7:2).

And so, we don’t want to kick them while they’re down, but we’re going to love them as we’d want to be loved, we’re going to extend to them the same grace that we’ve been given, and we’re going to pray for them doing everything we can to help restore their lives.

You see, that’s what we do in our family, that’s how we do it as Jesus followers, because the same grace that forgives us is the same grace that we use to restore others. In fact, the Bible describes it this way in Galatians chapter 6, verse two, Paul says,

 “Carry each other's burdens and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

And so, when our brother or sister is down and they’re hurting, we come alongside of them, offering to help lift his or her load; and the Bible says that in this way we fulfill the law of Christ. We don’t pretend like it didn’t happen, we don’t kick people out, but we love them back into the fellowship. We extend to them the same grace that we’ve received and we love them back, restoring them gently, so that they can do greater things for God.

This is how we as Jesus followers, love one another, fulfilling the law of Christ. It’s not unreasonable, because we don’t condemn one another, but if someone strays, we love them enough to tell them the truth, but we always do it with the grace of God. And so, we want to have a different perspective, not accusing one another, not blaming one another, but looking for evidence to support the verdict that God is for us, that all things work together for our good, and that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

You see, when you believe that, when you’re looking for a reason to rejoice, rather than a reason to accuse, it causes you to consider things differently, so that you can say like Paul said to the Corinthians. He said on one hand we’re pressed, but on the other hand we’re not crushed. On one hand we’re perplexed, but on the other hand we’re not despairing. On one hand we’re persecuted, but on the other hand we’re not abandoned. On one hand we’re struck down, but on the other hand we’re not destroyed. And so, what Paul is trying to communicate to us is that as the life of Jesus is revealed in our bodies, as we adopt the mind of Christ and submit to his will, we can get out of the judge’s seat and take a witnesses’ perspective (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

We can wake up each day wanting to see the good in people, wanting to believe the best about people, wanting to see God’s opportunity in every difficulty. Would you believe with me this morning, looking for evidence to support the verdict of God? Just believing that God is good, that he’s working in all things, that he’s causing everything to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

And so, if your brother or sister is going down a path that’s going to hurt them or hurt others, you’re going to love them way too much not to want to intercept them and bring healing and restoration into their lives. It’s not too unreasonable for God to expect you to extend to them the same grace that he has given you, that grace that has transformed you. Let’s pray together.

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