

TITLE: "Judge Not Lest You Be Judged"

TEXT: Matthew 7:1-5 (NT pp. 6, 7)

"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. ²For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. ³Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

Introduction – Less guilt, more love, joy and peace

...Let me begin with a poem.

I was shocked, confused, bewildered
As I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the beauty of it all,
Nor the lights or its decor.

But it was the folks in Heaven
Who made me sputter and gasp--
The thieves, the liars, the sinners,
The [druggies] and the trash.

There stood the kid from seventh grade
Who swiped my lunch money twice.
Next to him was my old neighbor
Who never said anything nice.

Herb, who I always thought
Was rotting away in hell,
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,
Looking incredibly well.

I nudged Jesus, 'What's the deal?
I would love to hear your take.
How'd all these sinners get up here?

God must've made a mistake.
 'And why's everyone so quiet,
 So somber - give me a clue.'
 'Hush, child,' He said, 'they're all in shock.
 No one thought they'd be seeing you.'

God does not want us to judge other people. In fact, God does not even want us to judge ourselves. This is not for GOD, it's for US. When we stop judging others, we receive a number of blessings.

When we stop judging others, we become less critical of ourselves.

When we stop judging others, other people become less critical of us.

When we stop judging others, God stops judging us.

In others words, when we stop judging others, there will be a LOT less guilt in our lives and a lot MORE love, joy and peace.

1. We become less critical of ourselves

The more judgmental we are of others, the more critical we become of ourselves. We can't help it; it's the way we are made. Jesus SAYS that when we squint to see the speck in someone else's eye, we fail, every TIME, to see the log in our own eye. And it usually doesn't take long for someone point out that log.

I just read about man who was upset with his wife because she refused to admit that she had a hearing problem. During his annual physical, he complained to his doctor about this. His doctor said, "Why don't you try this? When you get home put your head through the front door ask, 'Honey, what's for dinner?' If she doesn't answer, go into the living room and ask again. If there's no reply, go into the kitchen and ask again. If she STILL doesn't hear you, go right up to her and yell.

That evening, the man did just that and to his great satisfaction, she didn't answer the first three times. So, he went right up to her and yelled, "HONEY, WHAT'S FOR DINNER?"

She turned around and said, "Four the FOURTH time, we're having spaghetti!"

When we judge others, we can't help becoming more critical of ourselves. And, visa versa, when we stop being critical of others, we become a LOT less critical of ourselves. And being easier on ourselves can bring us a lot less guilt and a lot more love, joy and peace.

2. People will become less critical of us

When we judge others, others will judge us. Jesus SAYS, "...with the judgment you make you will be judged." When we are critical of others, it sends out some kind of invisible judgmental wave that encourages people to be judgmental toward us. And nobody likes to be judged.

I just read about a rural Kansas preacher in the 1800s who had just returned from a trip to New England to visit his family. He was met at the train station by Hiram, one of his church members. "How are things out your way, Hiram?" the preacher asked.

"Sad, sir. A cyclone came and wiped out my house, my barn and my crops."

"Dear, dear," cried the parson. ...However, I am really not surprised, Hiram. You remember I warned you about the way you've been livin' Punishment for such sin is inevitable. Just a matter of time."

Hiram said, "Reverend, the tornado also destroyed *your* house AND the church."

"What!" said the pastor, obviously horrified. "Oh well, the ways of the Lord are surely past all human understanding!"

When we stop being critical of others, others will tend to stop being critical of us. And that is certain to bring less guilt and more more love, joy and peace into our lives.

3. God will stop judging us

We have no right to judge others. Why? Because we do not know what they are going through and we really have no idea why they are doing what they do.

There is an ancient fable about a Persian King who wanted to be sure his four sons did not make rash judgments. ...At his command, his eldest son went to view a mango tree in the winter time. When spring came, the next eldest was sent to see the same tree. Summer followed and the next son made the journey. Finally in the fall the youngest son visited the tree.

The king then gathered his sons and asked what they had seen. The eldest said the tree looked like a burnt stump. The second disagreed, describing it as lovely, large and green. The third son declared its blossoms were as beautiful as the rose. The youngest son said that it had fruit like a huge pear. As sons do, they argued back and forth.

Then the king said, "You are all right! You see, each of you saw it in a different season, thus each of you described correctly what you saw. The lesson I want you to learn is to withhold your judgment until you have seen the tree in all seasons.

While this was obviously a wise king, GOD says that we are not to judge no matter HOW many seasons of a person's life we see. The only One who has the right to judge is Jesus. And someday we WILL be judged by the Lord. And Jesus says, "...with the judgment you make you will be judged." ...The fact that when I die the Lord is going to judge ME in the way I judge others here on earth provides ME with an incredibly compelling reason to stop judging others.

It boils down to humility. The more humble we are here on earth, the more lenient the Lord will be with our judgment. Lately, I have been marking the passages in the Bible where God says that his people should be humble. There are dozens and dozens. But the most poignant is this little parable of Jesus found in Luke chapter 18:9-14:

⁹[Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

The more humble we are, the less we will experience guilt and the more we will experience God's love, joy and peace.

Conclusion - "Best Prayer I Have Heard in a Long Time":

Let me close with a prayer I received by email a few years ago titled "Best Prayer I Have Heard in a Long Time":

Heavenly Father, help us to remember that the jerk who cut us off in traffic last night is a single mother who worked nine hours that day and is rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her children.

Help us to remember that the pierced, tattooed, disinterested young man who can't make change correctly is a worried 19-year-old college student balancing his apprehension over final exams with his fear of not getting his student loans for next semester.

Remind us that that the scary looking bum, begging for money in the same place every day (who really SHOULD get a job!) is a slave to addictions that we can only imagine in our worst nightmares.

Help us to remember that the old couple walking so annoyingly slowly through the store aisles and blocking our shopping progress are savoring this moment, knowing that based on the biopsy report she got back last week, this will be the last month that they will be able to shop together.

Heavenly Father, help us to forgive others, and forgive ourselves, so that WE will be forgiven and so that we will be able to experience more of your love, joy and peace, now and forever and ever.

Amen.