

Victory of the Lamb – February 12, 2017 – Bill Limmer

What Jesus Said – Do Not Judge – The Difference between Discernment and Judgment

Have you noticed that there a lot of Judge shows on TV? There is the People’s Court, Judge Mathis, Hot Bench, and Judge Judy among others. I’m telling you, you don’t want to be in Judge Judy’s Court. She will get you. There are also a lot of attorney advertisements on TV too: Habusch, Habusch, Davis and Rottier, Cannon and Dunphy, Hupy and Abraham and of course “one call that’s all” – David Gruber. For a society that is not fond on judgment we are apparently fond on judgment. Virtually everybody, Christian and non-Christian can quote the words “Do not judge.” These words are heard in the University classroom, street protests, on FB, in work room discussions. This verse is quoted and misunderstood by Christians and non-Christians. Today many people think do not judge is a command by Jesus for a universal acceptance of any lifestyle or teaching, a kind of live and let live philosophy. So, let’s look at Scripture and get at the heart of this passages meaning and then get into what is going on in our heart.

The first part of Jesus sermon on the mount has dealt with things like, murder and adultery, divorce, promises, love for your enemies, giving to the needy, prayer and worry among other items about fulfilling the law. He is talking about things people should do or shouldn’t do. And then Jesus goes off and says, 7:1 **Do not judge, or you too will be judged.** How does that work? First this passage is not saying that the disciples of Jesus are to be amorphous, antinomians, who never under any circumstance hold any opinions about what is right and what is wrong. And we know this is accurate because just a few verses later Jesus says, Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ferocious wolves. (Matthew 7:15) Key to understanding what Jesus is talking about is that the word judge has at least a couple of different meanings. To judge can mean to condemn a person, determining that person’s value or lack of value. Or to judge can mean to discern between two things, good or bad, right, or wrong. Rick Warren gives us this insight into our culture that you and I are in the mix with: **“Our culture has accepted two huge lies. The first is that if you disagree with someone’s lifestyle, you must fear or hate them. The second is that to love someone means you agree with everything they believe or do. Both are nonsense. You don’t have to compromise convictions to be compassionate.”** That is discernment.

(Matthew 7:2) For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. This passage asks us to see ourselves clearly and our desperate humble need for a Savior and as we look around and see people we see them as people who have the same desperate need for the Savior. For example: let’s say you and I come across a person who is constantly telling lies. If we measure him by justice alone, we will be very critical and condemning. But how truthful are we? Who of us has slanted a report or a story to make a point or to earn favor and to stay out of trouble. How would we fare we delivered only justice to the murder on death row or the adulterer who has torn his family and another apart especially in the eyes of Matthew 5 27-30? Or perhaps we apply God’s justice to the wealthy man who exploits the poor by unfair labor practices and greed while neglecting helping those in need ourselves whether it is because we are busy or we are afraid they would misuse any favor we showed to them. Do we really want the standard of God’s justice applied to us in the way we apply it to others? This passage also does not say that we earn God’s mercy by being merciful. Mercy by definition cannot be earned.

But here comes discernment. This verse is not telling the follower of Jesus must never speak against any sin. Satan loves it when we don't call sin, sin. **Not calling sin, sin is fake news.** God's standard of justice will not go away because someone wants it to go away. These verses address judgmental attitudes they do not deny that real sins may be present. Humility, by contrast, fosters empathy. It says "I'm like you. I get that. Maybe we can help each other." Many people run to that.

(Matthew 7:3-5) ³ **"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? ⁴ 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? ⁵ 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."**

The word *plank* speaks of a very large piece of wood, while the word *speck* speaks of a very small bit of wood, even as small as a little bit of sawdust. So, to loosely paraphrase, "How can you get the sawdust out of your brother's eye if you have a telephone pole in yours?" Understand that *speck* and *plank* are from the same original word, meaning they are of the same substance. In other words, Jesus was saying the reason some people are so adept at finding fault in the lives of others is because they are so familiar with it themselves. (Commentator Kent Hughes said) "We find it so easy to turn a microscope on another person's sin, but we look at ours through the wrong end of a telescope. We easily spot a speck of (sin) hypocrisy in another, because we have a logjam of it in our own lives. (Sometimes it is true that) wrath toward the speck in someone else's life comes from the suppressed guilt over the same massive sin in our own lives." Judged anyone as inferior lately? Sadly, the answer for most of us (including me) is... yes. From the guy who cut you off in traffic, to the off-beat person who's not picking up the social cues you're sending, to your weed-smoking neighbor... it's so easy to judge. And judgment just gets worse from there. It's the basis of racism, sexism and almost every other 'ism' you can think of. And then is the attack. Toxic, crippling words are launched as a way of inflicting harm on those we believe should know better. The attacks come in the form of opinions, jokes, Facebook banter and conversations, names, labels, stereotypes, characterizations. The ugly truth is that the reason we condemn and devalue other people is because it gives us the false feeling that we have more value. Isn't that what fed the Pharisee's need to condemn others including Jesus.

Matthew 7:6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. The dogs here are not like the ones who greet us when we come home with wagging tails, who think we do no wrong, who crawl up in our laps on the chair and share our bed with us. They are wild animals that roam the streets and the hills, with matted and filthy coats as the scrounge for food. The pigs are not those who washed and bedded down in the state fair barns. These pigs are not only an abomination to Jewish person, but a boar capable of violence. Jesus sketches a picture of a man holding a bag of pearls and is in the middle of these animals who want to tear him apart he cast the pearls gently before them. The animals quickly grab the up the pearls, only to find they are too hard to eat and unappetizing. Enraged they attack the one who fed them. Jesus is commanding his disciples not to share the richest of spiritual truth with persons who are persistently vicious, irresponsible, and unappreciative. Just as the pearls were under appreciated by the wild animals so the precious gospel is under appreciated by these people and the good news of Jesus only enrages them. Jesus is the pearl of greatest price. But not all people will receive the good news of Jesus. It does not gratify their immediate hunger. And it is not simply that some won't receive Jesus, but their cynical mockery, and their intellectual arrogance or their love for moral decay, and their vaunted self-sufficiency make them utterly impervious to Jesus. Over the years,

the experienced missionary refuses to attempt to explain Christianity and introduce Christ to the person who wants to mock, argue and ridicule. It accomplishes nothing and squanders other opportunities. Just because someone will not receive the gospel or mocks us or treats us like trash, does not give us the right to return the malicious favor. And this doesn't give us the right to neglect verbal witness on the grounds that there are only dogs and pigs out there or there might be dogs and pigs out there. Most people who come to faith later in life have had a history of at least balking if not mocking. With those who are not yet believers what very often is appealing is when they see a Christian living like Christ.

Reddit Today I learned - The more I reflect on these passages, the more I am self-condemned and humbled for being a fool. I am guilty of having a judgmental spirit from time to time and I am sure more times than I even know I am guilty of having judged others. How about you? I can't stand that and yet because of my sinful nature, that sin is crouching at the front door of my heart. I have also learned that there have been times when I have let sin slide as if it were no big deal. As if at the end of the slide is nice pool like at the Dells instead of a lake of fire. Oh my, how about you?

God has judged us. We have been found lacking righteousness and all the while have labeled others unrighteous. We have been found to be mute while sin is left to laugh. We all are all sinful and full of sin. The evidence is clear, compelling, and overwhelming, yet check out what God! God declared us not guilty through Jesus Christ. The cross was the single greatest act of love in human history, and it was, at the same time, extremely violent. The difference is Jesus took the violence on Himself. Jesus assumed all responsibility for our sin. He did not strike out at those who mocked Him or fight against those who nailed Him in place; forgave them. The violence of love is what we see on the cross. God who judges us most finally will be the one who loves us most fully. We are inferior to God yet he died for us. God is great and we are even good yet he took all our sin. This is not fake news this is good news. In Jesus, grace and truth are perfectly fused. And to the degree we discern grace and truth fused, is the degree to which our breath is taken away. This kind of love does not give others a pass or pretend everyone is OK. Rather, it recognizes the brokenness, fear, anger, shame, sin and hate in others and agrees to take all of that on itself. The violence of love asks each of us to take the violence on ourselves.

This is grace. Grace leads us to love not condemn, to help not ignore, to reconcile not reject, to restore not ridicule, to renew not come unglued. God never asked us to condemn the world. He did ask us to love the world. What is the difference between discernment and judgment? Here is your scorecard so you can see how you are doing:

Condemnation will lead you and me to be proud, to hate, to disregard, to condemn and to withhold Jesus. Discernment will lead you and me to be humble, love, help, pray, and share Jesus with people who need Him as much as we do. If you find yourself in the Condemnation side run to the cross. I will meet you there. And God will empower us through his violent love to move to the Discernment side and to act justly, love mercy and humbly walk with God. Amen.