

## **Judge Not Lest Ye Be Judged** by Jeff Strite

Matthew 7:1-7:6

OPEN: Little Tommy was out on the playground during recess and was picking on the other children on the playground. One of his favorite ways of taunting the other kids was make ugly faces at them.

Mrs. Smith was the teacher in charge of supervising recess and she saw Tommy doing this. She took him aside and said "You know, Bobby, when I was a little girl, I was told that if I made ugly faces, my face would freeze and always stay like that."

Bobby looked up into her face and replied, "Well, Mrs. Smith, you can't say you weren't warned."

This morning we're going to be talking about "judging"

You know, there are people in this world who know very little about Jesus or Christianity but they can quote you one thing Jesus did say on this topic. You know what they'll quote? That's right: "Judge not lest ye be judged."

They may not know anything else Jesus said but they do know He said that. And the reason people remember that comment is that they get very uncomfortable about other people judging them. In fact, our culture is so troubled by this idea of being "judged" that we have several proverbs warn us about it.

"Don't judge a book by its cover." George Eliot

"God doesn't propose to judge a man until he's dead... so why should you?"

"Only God is in a position to look down on anyone."

And of course, God Himself said: "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (I Samuel 16:7)

Now why would this be such a problem?

Why would this "judging" stuff be so universally disliked?

Why would it be so evil that it is even condemned by God?

Well - because most everybody does it.

Most everybody judges someone else at one time or another in their lives.

Often times it's the very people that will quote Jesus: "Judge not lest ye be judged"

What makes this worse is that most of the people who quote Jesus on this... misquote Him.

Did you realize you can parrot Jesus' words EXACTLY and still misquote Him?

How's that possible?

You can misquote Jesus by only quoting PART of what He says.

For example, just a couple of sentences after Jesus says "Judge not..." He says this:

"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." Matthew 7:6

Now... is Jesus talking here about real dogs and pigs?

No, He's talking about people who act LIKE dogs and pigs.

People who have no respect for sacred things and who will destroy things that are precious to you. And then they'll turn on you and chew you up and spit you out - just because they can.

So now, here's the question: How do you know who's a dog and who's a pig?

You have to make a "judgment" --- don't you?

You have to judge a person's actions and decide whether or not you can trust them.

And that makes perfect sense if you think about it.

Let's say you're going on a long trip and you need someone to house sit for you. You have two friends that come to mind to do this for you. One takes great care of everything they own. Everything in their home has a place and everything is in its place. Their home is immaculate.

Your other friend is a nice person - but they're a slob!

Now - who you gonna ask to take care of your house while you're gone?

You have just made a value-judgment based on the character of your friends.

And you cannot live a normal life without making judgments about who you can trust and who you can't.

Jesus didn't really mean we shouldn't make judgments about people - He just meant we should be VERY careful how we do it. Notice the entire quote on judging in Matthew 7 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 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 7:1-2

In other words - if you're HARSH with others, God will be harsh with you.

But if you show MERCY to others... God will show mercy to you

In the same way you judge others, you'll be judged.

James explains it this way

"Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who SPEAKS AGAINST HIS BROTHER or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 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 4:11-12

You see, the Bible is warning us against the tendency to play God.

But there is only ONE lawgiver and judge.

Who's that? (God)

There's only one God and you ain't Him.

Don't you go trying to take over His job.

Like that one quote we mentioned earlier says:

"Only God is in a position to look down on anyone."

(Sarah Brown quoted by H. Jackson Brown, Jr. in "P.S. I Love You")

But here's the problem: most people don't think that way.  
Most people believe they have the right to sit in judgment of others

If others don't live like we think they ought to live, or they don't think like we think ought to think – we can be tempted to say some unkind things about them.

ILLUS: I've done it. Back in my first church I went to a high school basketball game. Who are those guys on the floor in the black and white striped shirts? (Referees) Well the Referees in this game were not thinking the way I thought they should have been thinking, and they weren't making calls the way I thought they should have been making those calls.  
So, I insulted them.  
I belittled them.  
I questioned their intelligence.

Do you realize that God rebukes us once in a while?  
That's what happened to me that night.  
No one around me seemed to notice what I was doing... but God did.  
And I got nudged that night. Into my mind came the realization that...  
"I'm a preacher, a representative of the most High God. And here I am insulting people I don't even know."

I don't do that anymore.

Now, why do people "judge" others?  
I mean, this was an important enough subject that God repeatedly addresses it's evils. If God condemns this harsh type of judging... why on earth would we do it?

Well, we do it because (frankly)...  
We're smarter than they are.  
We're more insightful than they are.  
We're more holy/ righteous/ spiritual... than they are.  
We're just plain BETTER than they are.

And because that is true then in every conflict - if we're in the wrong (pause) the other person is MORE wrong than I am. Now Jesus understood this tendency to judge others in our conflicts so He set down what I call the "90% Solution"

(Go down into the audience)  
Let's say Greg here, and I, are angry with each other. I'm willing to be 'big' about this and admit that I may have some fault in this conflict... but he has more. I see the problem as being 10% my fault and 90% his.  
Now Greg sees the problem as 90% MY fault and 10% his.  
Essentially we both see the other as having planks/logs coming out of their eyes. But the

speck in our own eyes is insignificant compared to the fault of the other.  
We have "judged" each other, and found the other to be more at fault than ourselves.

So Jesus says – quit doing that.

Take the log (what your adversary sees as being 90% your fault) out of your own eye...  
then you've opened the way for the two of you deal with the other guys fault.

ILLUS: Now, let's say that you don't think you have ANY fault in this matter at all. That's  
easy to remedy. You simply say to the other person "I have offended you" - which is true.  
Even if you haven't done anything wrong... the other person is offended by you. So you  
state the obvious.

"I have offended you. Would you forgive me for offending you."

Thus, you've removed the log from your own eye, and you can work at solving the conflict.

What's the point?

The point is that God's not into our condemning those we disagree with.

Henry Ford once summed up God's thinking this way:

"Don't find fault, find a remedy." (from Henry Ford's diary)

This especially is true when it comes to church discipline

Have you ever heard of "excommunication?"

It's where a church is called upon by God to confront and discipline sinful members who  
refuse to repent and change their immoral lifestyles.

It's Biblical, and an example of it is recorded in I Corinthians chapters 5 and 6.

Apparently there was a young man living with his step-mother. It's such an immoral  
situation that Paul says "even the pagans don't do this!"

Now, the church at Corinth was trying to be non-judgmental. They knew about the man's  
sin, but chose to look the other in the false hope that he might be convicted on his own of  
the evil of choice.

But Paul told them – they weren't doing anybody any favors. If they ignored the man's sin,  
he'd go to hell – and they'd be at fault. His blood would be on their hands. And others in the  
church would see the church "approving" his sin and they'd be more likely to engage in their  
own kinds of sins. Why not? The church apparently didn't care.

This is worth remembering: A church won't stand against immorality doesn't stand for much  
of anything. Such a church has no message and embarrasses it's Savior.

But the story out of I Corinthians 5 has a happy ending. The man, that the church ultimately  
ostracized, repented and wanted to come back. And they brought him back in. He was  
forgiven and reinstated as a fellow brother.

You see, that's the point of BIBLICAL excommunication.

A Godly church doesn't want to destroy people.

It wants people to repent

When Jesus "forgave" people's sins He would often say: "Go and sin no more."

ILLUS: There's been a few times in my 19 years here that there have been people who have lived immoral lifestyles and the Elders have had to call a person in for a private conversation. Now I'm not going to give you the details of those situations, because – frankly – it's none of your business.

But we sat those folks down and explained to them that if they didn't change, not only would they not be able to be part of this congregation, but they'd go to hell...and we didn't want that!

We'd do whatever we had to do to help them.

We'd get them counseling; we'd work to help them change their lifestyle.

We wanted to help. We wanted to keep them.

But not if they weren't willing to attempt to change.

Our objective was to confront a sinful member of the church with mercy and love and hope for repentance. Because we understood that God says: 'with the measure you give, you shall receive.

Now, one more observation.

Christians can some of the most judgmental people on the planet.

Why would that be?

Because we have become convinced of the truth of God's Word and of the need to stand up for Him in a world that is often hostile to the things we hold dear.

And so, we can get a bit snarky once in a while.

Snarky? My definition of snarky is: Opinionated, self-righteous and rude.

I've noticed this type of behavior on Facebook... by Christians.

If someone is saying something that another disagrees with they get snarky with each other.

They call each other names.

They question the other person's integrity or intelligence.

They get real close to cursing at each other... but they wouldn't do that because Christians aren't supposed to curse.

(pause)

But actually – what they've done is worse than cursing

Do you know why it's worse than cursing?

Did you know we're ALL made in the image of God. Each and every one of you is made in God's image. If we insult, mistreat, or belittle others... do you know who we've really insulted, mistreated and belittled?

That's right – we've insulted, mistreated and belittled someone who is made in the image of God.

Even those who are not living as they should – even those who have made bad decisions and have lived immoral lifestyles - are made in God's image.

ILLUS: One of my favorite stories in the Gospels is the one where Jesus has been invited to the home of Simon the Pharisee. Simon doesn't really like Jesus...but I think he invited Him in order to find a way to insult Him, and right off the bat... that's exactly what Simon does. Normally, a gracious host would wash the feet of his guests – but not Simon. He quietly snubs Jesus and tries to anger Him.

But Jesus is God. Insults from men like Simon are mere annoyances. He just ignores Simon's slights.

Now, this gathering is a big affair. Anybody who is anybody has come to Simon's house. In the confusion of moment, a prostitute slips into the house. She just wants to see this Jesus everybody has been talking about. She just wants to get close enough to see Him... and then slip out the back door.

But when she gets close, she begins to realize how shabby and dirty her life has been. Here's a holy man of God, and she doesn't deserve to be around Him. And she begins to cry... and her tears streak down and smear the dirt that Simon refused to wash off Jesus' feet.

Now she's embarrassed and she gets down her knees and anoints his feet with the perfume that she uses to make herself smell good as a prostitute... and dries his feet with her hair.

(Pause. I moved to another part of the stage and look back at the area where I had described the woman's heartache).

And Simon sees all this and says

"I gotcha Jesus! You say you're a prophet? And you don't even know the filth of the person who's washing your feet. I've gotcha."

And he in his mind he considers how he can best humiliate both Jesus and this prostitute in front of all his other guests.

Now Jesus has been insulted by experts. Simon is an amateur.

Jesus can handle being insulted by the likes of him.

Jesus can handle insults against his own character. But He's not about to put up with an arrogant attack on this woman's sorrow. With the precision of a surgeon Jesus proceeds to cut Simon to his heart and reveal the hypocrisy that lay within.

"Simon, I have something to tell you." Says Jesus

Simon responds: "What is it you want to tell me (pause) teacher."

Jesus then tells his story.

"There were once 2 men who owed moneylender a great deal of money. One owned 5000 denarii (@ \$50,000). Another owed 500 denarii (@ \$5000). Neither could repay their debt, and so the money lender –thinking to cut his losses, cancelled the debt of both.

Now, Simon, which would love the moneylender more?"

Simon just couldn't help himself.

He was a good Pharisee and he just couldn't help showing his wisdom to this upstart teacher. So responded "I suppose the one who owed most – love most."

Jesus responded: "Very good Simon, you have judged correctly."

Then Jesus literally turned His back on Simon and faced the woman.

He turned away from the judgmental, self-righteousness of the Pharisee to the simple repentance of this woman.

In Luke 7:44-50 we're told the rest of the story: "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-- for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

You see, judgmental folks don't love much because they don't think they've been forgiven much. After all, if you don't need to be forgiven... you're obviously more righteous.

You're obviously more qualified to pass judgment.

You're obviously in a position to advise God.

But if you've been forgiven much... you understand the value of mercy.

And you understand the value of showing that same mercy to others.