

Accept, Don't Judge One Another
Rev. Lynell M. Caudillo
Matthew 7:1-5, James 2:1-13
January 14, 2018

7 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 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.

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.

James 2:1-13

2 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,”^[a] you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,”^[b] also said, “You shall not murder.”^[c] If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Have you ever made a snap judgement, only to find out later that you were wrong? Have you ever been a victim of a snap judgement?

Several years ago, two commercials aired during the Super Bowl, sponsored by Ameriquest Mortgage Company. Both communicated the same message.

“Don’t judge too quickly.”

One featured a man standing at the counter in a convenience store, talking on his cell phone. He says to the person on the other end of the call: “You’re getting robbed.”

When the two store clerks hear this, they react swiftly. One sprays the customer with pepper spray, while the other zaps him with a taser gun!

In the second commercial, a man is preparing a romantic dinner. He is chopping vegetables while some tomato sauce simmers on the stove. A large white cat manages to knock the saucepan onto the floor, and then falls into the mess. Just as the man picks up the tomato spattered cat, his wife opens the door. There he is: holding the cat, dripping with red sauce in one hand and a huge butcher knife the other. (All the romance is gone!)

These commercials demonstrate that things are not always as they appear.

The message? “Don’t judge too quickly.”

I want to show a brief video—Chase has it ready for us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm58V8Qgq1Y>

(Video is of a man who appears to be homeless, poorly dressed, bearded, disheveled. He is actually the new pastor of a mega church, and it is his first Sunday. Few talk to him, he is asked to sit in the rear of the sanctuary, no one offers him change, etc. When introduced, he quotes Matthew 25:31-45)

The Old Testament has at least 14 references to showing partiality (as in God does **not** show partiality) and the New Testament, three; although if the word searched for is “favoritism” the references increase to 7.

The passages we are considering today address this issue of judging others.

There are several kinds of “judgement”. It is appropriate and necessary to use our minds to discern... to consider facts in order to make decisions. We study God’s word as it can inform us as to God’s desires for us, and we choose to act in accordance with it. That is one form of judgement.

But the form of judgement I am addressing primarily has to do with our attitude toward others. I submit to you that there are some of us who need an attitude adjustment. This attitude adjustment will result from corrected vision.

Not long ago I made an appointment with my eye doctor, because I wasn’t seeing clearly. I knew my eyes had changed. The exam was a surprise even to the Dr. My astigmatism had

disappeared! Apparently this is not supposed to happen. In any case, the outcome resulted in new lenses that now correct my vision to 20:20.

There are times when our spiritual vision is impaired, and needs correction. In this case Jesus says we've got a problem. If you recall, Jesus' first job was most likely working alongside Joseph as a carpenter. He was no doubt familiar with wooden beams, and sawdust. He lacked a pair of safety glasses, so it is safe to assume that on more than one occasion, he had experienced the painful discomfort of a speck of sawdust in his eye.

Not only does that hurt, it can cause permanent damage, it also impairs vision. However, more painful still would be a wooden beam. The word he uses for "log" means a joist or support beam, one that would be a primary support in a structure.

Do you see the humor in a person, being more concerned about the speck in his brother's eye, while at the same time he fails to realize his own vision is seriously impaired by a huge beam in his own eye?!

It is easy to see other's failures and criticize them, while at the same time we may have the same issues.

The solution is to look at ourselves first. Look in the mirror. What do you see?

This is what I see, when I look in the mirror:

I see a flawed human being, in need of God's grace.

I see a person made in the image of Christ, one for whom Christ died, one of God's beloved children.

Those are facts.

So when judging others we must take care to do so with the same attitude with which we ourselves would want to be judged—an attitude summarized by the "Golden Rule", as stated in Verse 8 for if we "Love our neighbor as we love ourselves", we will treat others the way we would like to be treated.

So the measure we use to judge others, will be the measure used to judge us. One would be wise to select a measure of mercy! For grace is "not receiving what we Do deserve!"

Jesus says "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

We should be inclined to give people the benefit of the doubt, and try to look for and expect the best in others. I read recently about a couple who were approaching their 25th wedding anniversary. For years the wife had been complaining to her husband that he never put the cap back on the toothpaste. So he decided that for their anniversary, he'd surprise her! He started putting the cap back on the tube after he used it. After about a week or so, she asked him suspiciously: "How come you stopped brushing your teeth?" She misjudged his behavior!

There is a difference between exercising good judgement, and acting “judgmentally”.

Some of you are familiar with Garrison Keillor’s fictional town of Lake Wobegon, where one can worship at the “Church of Perpetual Responsibility”.

James describes what a friend of mine calls the “Church of the Immaculate Perception”! That church has the truth, but it also has problems. One problem is caused by the fact that they have an usher who is suffering from a severe case of spiritual myopia/nearsightedness! Two guys arrive at church late, but for different reasons.

The first of the latecomers appears to be a wealthy man; he’s wearing a Rolex watch and a fine tweed suit with a silk scarf in the breast pocket. This nearsighted usher takes one look at him and thinks: “Wow, let’s give him the best seat in the house! And we’ll be sure we pass the offering plate his way.”

No sooner does the usher get Mr. Rolex seated, than in walks the homeless man. He hopes not to attract any attention. He simply wants a warm place and a little peace and quiet where he can think. The usher responds to him with disdain, thinking to himself: “I can’t seat him too close to anybody, he smells like he’s not had a shower in a week! He wouldn’t have a nickel to put in the offering plate!” (modified from H. Hendricks)

The truth of it is, we judge and misjudge others, often on the basis of very little actual information. Remember the video we saw earlier.

Instead, we jump to conclusions. We are guilty as charged by James in 2:4

⁴“have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” We make distinctions based on human categories, not divine ones. We forget that God will judge us.

More often than not, we judge others basis of the material, not the spiritual; on the basis of the external, not the internal, on the basis of the present/temporal, not the eternal.

Furthermore, we judge on the basis of superficialities/appearances: dress, makeup, hair color (purple?), lack of hair (skinhead?), tattoos, height or weight. And as we celebrate tomorrow the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. we are reminded that we should judge one another “by the content on one’s character, not the color of one’s skin”. We judge on the basis of categories: economic status, educational background, political party, age, sex, sexual orientation.

V.5-7 James draws a contrast between our human way of judging and God’s way of judging. God does not discriminate against people on this basis, so why do we?

God’s choice has nothing to do with externals, but internals. God’s choice has nothing to do with one’s economic status, but everything to do with one’s faith status. Are you and I “rich” or “poor” in faith?

What a perilous position to be in, to be found rejecting someone whom Jesus Christ has accepted/received!

Our vision needs to be corrected! Because...

When we gaze into the eyes of another person, we are seeing one who is made in God's image, one who is beloved by God, one for whom Christ died!

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here!

The cross is what corrects our vision. Why? Because it changes everything. It changes us as those who lived for ourselves, to those who "live... for him who died and was raised again"! The cross beams, correct our vision by removing the "log" from our eye, as we now have a sober view of ourselves as the sinners for whom Christ died and rose again. So now, ***¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.***

Our "point of view" and we ourselves, are transformed—we are new creations in Christ. And, everyone we meet has that same potential. We have the joy, the privilege, of sharing that good news with others, as we are now ambassadors for Christ, and agents of reconciliation.

Wouldn't you rather be an "agent of reconciliation" than a judge/critic?

What we are, is a result of how we see ourselves, and how we see/view others. May we be motivated by God's love, to be less judging and more accepting. Love is what makes the difference!

Edwin Markham has said it poetically:

"He drew a circle that shut me out,

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But LOVE and I had the wit to win:

We drew a circle that took him in."

Let us pray.