

What Would Jesus Undo?: Judgment

Luke 6:37-38

Sunday, April 19, 2026

If you have ever met a human, you know that judgment is something we humans are really, really good at! Most of our news and entertainment (when we can even tell the difference) is predicated on judgment. Likewise, social media has taken all the judgment we used to share in hushed conversations and spilled it out for the whole world to see in every comment section. Judgment is a natural stance for humans. I believe the origins of judgment in discernment are God-given. Humans need to be able to “judge” friends from foes to survive. The ability to “judge” when we encounter injustice and “judge” how to correct it is what allows our human race to move forward toward a better world where justice is done for all.

However, I believe that what we often call judgment goes far beyond the God-given discernment we have. Like so many of God’s gifts, we are experts at distorting those good gifts into something harmful to our bodies and spirits. Discernment becomes an obsession with finding the next fault. Rejection of evil becomes a witch hunt. Resisting evil becomes a relish for punishing others for their sins.

If our media is any indication, we actually enjoy the perverse pleasure that judgment gives us. We love to see people “put in their place.” We relish a good, heated argument. We love finding the tiniest mistakes we can point out to shame someone, and we don’t stop there; we often can’t wait to share our judgment and condemnation with others. It makes us so happy when our “enemies” fail. We would rather see people get what’s coming to them than see them loved. We would rather see a downfall than a conversion.

The damage this does to ourselves and others, spiritually, physically, and emotionally, is enormous at both the individual and societal levels. I recently read an article reporting that high levels of anxiety among young people are partially caused by a fear of being labeled “cringe.” Hear this wisdom from a student, “Society nowadays has become too comfortable with openly judging each other. Judging for how we speak, act, or even going as far to dislike someone over their hobbies...The judgment of people has become automatic, ingrained within our brains and our society.” This leads students not to be themselves for fear of judgment. Many reported constantly wondering whether they were being judged and refraining from speaking or other forms of expression out of fear of being judged. This takes a toll on their mental and physical health.

The roots of our racism, sexism, and other societal ills are also driven by judgment. We allow our negative experience with one person to cloud our views of entire groups of people. When these experiences are amplified throughout society, we see their awful effects throughout our history, including wars and genocide.

Being judgmental also harms the person doing the judging. It raises stress, anxiety, and depression, which affect our relationships with others. These conditions also affect our physical health. We have probably all seen studies linking these mental states to higher levels of inflammation in our bodies.

Most importantly, being judgmental cuts one off from love. I believe it is impossible to embody the unconditional agape love we are called to when we dwell in a state of constant judgment of others. We can try to fake it, but inside we will be the people of whom Jesus’ brother James spoke in James 3:9, using our words to bless God while at the same time cursing

other humans who are made in God's image. Notice how Jesus frames the connection to forgiveness. We will struggle to forgive when we have an attitude of judgment and condemnation, which, in turn, affects our ability to accept love and to be forgiven. We emphasize this fact every time we say the Lord's Prayer, where we ask to be forgiven in the way that we forgive others. Honestly, I think that is one of the scariest passages in Scripture!

Fortunately for us, Jesus knows us so well and knows that by undoing our proclivity toward judgment, condemnation, and unforgiveness, we will not only reverse the negative effects of our attitude but also reap blessings for ourselves and others. This is why Jesus wants to undo our judgment? Because God is waiting to release blessings on us and others!

No, I'm not speaking of blessings in a material sense, as many who remove verse 38 from its context proclaim. Money is not mentioned at all in this passage. Jesus is talking about tangible blessings that overflow our lives and into the lives of others when we cease being judgmental and condemnatory and begin to be forgiving and giving. These are the opposite of the negative effects mentioned earlier, and we will experience those positive benefits in ways far beyond what we can imagine. The image Jesus uses is of a bushel basket, not just filled to overflowing with grain, but with the grain pressed to the bottom and shaken up so all the grain moves to the bottom, making room for far more than we thought the bushel should hold.

I have recently discovered a YouTube channel called "Sitting with Dogs." Created by Rocky Kanaka, the channel features visits to animal shelters and efforts to acclimate traumatized dogs to being around humans, helping them get adopted. The most heart-wrenching and heartwarming moments come when he talks to the dogs to comfort them. What surprised me is that he speaks to them as he would to a human. He tells them they are strong, that they have

survived so much that is not their fault, that one day soon they will find their forever home, and that they will be happier than they have ever been. The reactions of these beautiful animals to his words are amazing. They immediately become friendlier, with reduced signs of stress and trauma. Which makes me wonder... how many of the humans we interact with each day don't hear such words of affirmation? How many of us feel trapped in a cage created by our judgment of ourselves and of others? How much do we need to hear words of encouragement and to hear that God loves us? How much could we change the world if we "undid" our judgment and condemnation of each other and replaced those attitudes with forgiveness and love? If we believe Jesus is right, it would be a whole new world. Amen.