

## Judging Others.

Text: Matt 7:1-6

Suggested Hymns:

357, 239, 345, 284, 344

1) Forbidden by Christ

2) Dangerous

3) Inconsistent

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 7:1-5, <sup>1</sup> ***“Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.***

<sup>3</sup> ***“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye?***

<sup>5</sup> ***“Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. (NKJV)***

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our text is taken from the Sermon on the Mount. Concerning the importance of what Jesus preached in that sermon we read in Matthew 7:24-27 <sup>24</sup> ***“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: <sup>25</sup> “and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.***

<sup>26</sup> ***“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> “and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”***

It is certainly a wise person who is obedient to the will of Jesus Christ. We endanger our soul’s salvation when we are not bringing forth in every aspect the fruit of faith.

But, sad to say, many people are inclined to disregard the will of the Lord. We hear of such inconsistency found in the lives of Christian men and women in our text. Our theme is *Judging Others*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## **1. Judging Others Is Forbidden By Christ**

This does not apply to judges, of course, or to those people whose position makes it necessary for them to judge — parents, teachers, pastors, etc.

Luther says: *“But, lest we stumble at this preaching and misunderstand it as if hereby it were altogether forbidden to judge and pass sentence, it is clear from what has often been said above, that Christ is preaching here only to his disciples and is not at all speaking of the judgement or punishment that must occur in the world, as father and mother at home among the children and servants must judge, rebuke, and also chastise if they will not do right.*

*Thus, a prince or a judge, if he means to discharge his duty properly, cannot do otherwise than to punish. That belongs to secular government, which has nothing to do with us. Therefore we will not interfere with how things should go in that sphere. But here we are speaking of another kingdom that does not indeed weaken or annul the other, namely, spiritual life and being among Christians.”*

Christ refers to the judging one of another in every-day life. Christ forbids the judging of the neighbour, the fellow-Christian, in his every word and deed and motive.

It is the judging of each other that is condemned in the Eighth Commandment. We are to *“put the best construction on everything,”* which means that we should *“explain our neighbour’s actions in the best way possible.”*<sup>1</sup>

This is not to be confused with, nor does it annul, the procedure laid down in Matthew 18. We read in Matthew 18:15-17,<sup>15</sup> *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”*<sup>16</sup> *“But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’”*<sup>17</sup> *“And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*

The fact that judging the deeds and motives of others is forbidden by Christ and is forbidden in the Law of God should be for the Christian sufficient reason for abstaining from such practise. Christ says in our text, **“Judge not.”** Christ forbids judging, and that must settle it for the Christian.

James warns against it in his epistle, as we read in James 4:11-12, **“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. <sup>12</sup> There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”**

It may be hard to overcome this inclination to judge. It is so human. But whatever Christ commands us to do He helps us to accomplish. Let no disciple say, *I cannot stop judging others; that is my nature.* Christ says, **“Judge not.”** Therefore the Christian must overcome this weakness, this tendency, this desire, this sin, and the Christian can count on Christ to help him. Scripture says, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”<sup>2</sup>**

Many people do not try to overcome their weaknesses. Many people do not go to Christ as they should for help and strength and determination to overcome this evil inclination and practise of judging which conforms not to the will of Christ.

But for one who was washed in the blood of the Lamb and is clothed in the righteousness of Jesus there is only one thing to do, and that is, not to judge other people and their motives.

## **2. Judging Others Is Dangerous**

Judging others reverts back to the one judging. Our text says, <sup>1</sup> **“Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. God says in Galatians 6:7, <sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.** Judging others works as a boomerang.

The natural consequence of habitual judging of others is that others judge you. In judging others, a person usually judges himself, as we read in Romans 2:1, <sup>1</sup> **“Therefore you are inexcusable, ... whoever you are who judge,**

*for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.* Those who judge the actions of others often forget for the moment that they themselves have the same faults and commit the same sins. Thus in judging others they condemn themselves.

God judges the person who judges. We read in Romans 2:3, <sup>3</sup> *And do you think this, ... you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?*

A woman once told a pastor that she did not like the passage in the Bible *“Judge not, and you shall not be judged.”*<sup>3</sup> It was evident that she felt that when she judged others, she laid herself open to judgement and condemnation.

Judging others harms them. Many an ill report about some one has caused untold damage.

If some one has sinned and you are offended, then go to that person in all humility and love as laid down in Matthew 18.

The trouble is that the judging in little things (mote/speck) is often done behind their back and in malice and envy, instead of in love, and is passed on and frequently works irreparable harm.

We read in Romans 14:10-13, <sup>10</sup> *But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.* <sup>11</sup> *For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.”* <sup>12</sup> *So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.* <sup>13</sup> *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.*

### **3. Judging Others Is Inconsistent.**

Judging others is inconsistent with our Christian profession. Christ calls the person who judges others a hypocrite. <sup>5</sup> *“Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.* It is unloving, unkind, and unchristian.

God tells us in 1 Peter 4:8-9, *above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”* <sup>9</sup> *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*

And in 1 Corinthians 13:7 that love <sup>7</sup> *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* We are to love one another, we are to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Uncharitable judging is out of harmony with such love. How unbecoming to a Christian is this hasty and nasty judging!

God does not enter into judgement with the repentant believer, and the person who is shown such goodness and love at the hands of God should not judge others. It reveals vanity, jealousy, egotism, and pride. Condemnation of others is often done in ignorance of all the facts. A Christian should always be “delaying judgement.” That must be the perpetual practise of a disciple of Christ. How un-christlike is this attitude *“I do not want to judge him, but ...”*

Judging others is inconsistent in the face of our own practises. Christ brings that out very directly and forcibly in referring to the speck and the plank. How prone we are to see faults and failings in others and slow to recognise identical or similar or even worse shortcomings and sins in ourselves!

How quick we are to see sins in others and to see sin even where there is no sin, but so frequently blind to our own sins! Many people minimise their own glaring faults and iniquities but magnify their neighbour’s lesser frailties!

We find Christians judging others for their lack of activity and interest in the Lord’s work, when they themselves are doing little or nothing. We find members of one committee in the church criticising another committee for not doing more, not appreciating what the other is doing nor being fully acquainted with its objects and forgetting some of its past activities and accomplishments.

We find Christians who would not think of stealing, or gossip; Christians who would not think of swearing, but — what a temper they display! There is a lot of lopsided Christianity in the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Jesus says in John 8:7, *“He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.”* Like the Pharisee some so-called Christians thank God that they are not as other people are, *extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.*<sup>4</sup> But they forget the more important matters of love and mercy.

A Christian should first eliminate from his own life and practise all that is wrong and sinful and contrary to God's Law, and then he will be better able to help others to walk more becoming as a disciple of Christ.

Then most of us will be so busy taking the plank out of our own eye, remedying our own life, striving to overcome our besetting sin, endeavouring to be faithful and loyal to Jesus who bought us with His blood, that we will have neither time nor inclination to sit in judgement over others.

And giving attention to our own faults and failings, being conscious of our own shortcomings and evil tendencies and transgressions, our judgement of others will be tempered with love and patience.

And if by the grace of God we are gaining in godliness and improving with the help of the Holy Spirit in our own spiritual life, we will help our erring brother in all humility and charity.

Dear Friends, what a severe accusation of our sin! Let us turn from such shameful inclination and sin. Let us seek forgiveness and strive to conquer our corrupt nature. Let it cost what it will, we must avoid the sin against which our Lord warns us in these words.

Even though the removal of the plank out of our own eye before judging others is contrary to the practise of the scoffer and enemy of Christ, it must always remain the purpose of the Christian to abstain from uncharitable judging of the motives and deeds of others. He must diligently apply himself to the task of perfecting his own life, so that he may be a real salt in the earth and a real light in the world and a real help to the weak Christian.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, "***Do not judge***" is not an absolute prohibition. As a matter of fact, there are times when we have the responsibility to judge. If we fail or refuse to judge at such times, we are sinning by not judging.

One thing that we must always judge is doctrine. We are to beware of false teachers. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. You cannot know if what they say is correct unless you judge what is being taught. Scripture says in 1 John 4:1, '***Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*** It is your duty to judge doctrine, and to judge it on the basis of God's Word alone.

We read in Acts 17:10-11, <sup>10</sup> *Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup> These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.* In other words, the people of Berea judged what Paul told them by looking in the Scriptures.

Likewise, when someone clearly disobeys a commandment of God or obviously teaches a doctrine contrary to God's Word, God has already judged that person, and He wants us to agree in that judgement and to proclaim that judgement. We have no right to condemn the motives or to judge the sincerity of other people, but we must condemn and warn against anything or anybody that disobeys or rejects what God says.

So in conclusion, when we do not have all the facts, God wants us to put the best construction on everything, and we never have the right to condemn someone's motives on the basis of our own feelings.

Only God can look into a person's heart and recognise false motives or insincerity, and that kind of judging we had better leave to God. Don't judge the other person's motives, but do judge doctrine. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> *Luther's Small Catechism*, Q 62, The Eighth Commandment

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 4:13

<sup>3</sup> Luke 6:37

<sup>4</sup> Luke 18:11