

Respectable Sins: Judgmentalism

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[0 : 00] Well, welcome here for this Sunday, October 31st. The Protestant Church recognizes today as Reformation Sunday. And I hope Donna will like that because we talked about it last Sunday.

She and I had a little chat in the foyer after the service. So this is the day when a young Catholic priest named Martin Luther advocated for change in the church.

And he posted a list of 95 changes. That he proposed for the Catholic Church of his day. And it was that act, much to Luther's chagrin as I've read a few times, that gave birth to the Protestant Reformation.

See, Martin Luther didn't set out to split his church. But God had a plan. And we're part of that plan today. This morning as we continue in our series called Respectable Sins, let's refresh a few things that we've considered so far.

Michelle and I, Connor woke up this morning, last night, with the flu. So then we realized he's on sound and projection this morning. So then there's a cascade in our household, right?

[1 : 13] So Michelle had my back for now. And now I'm flying solo. So extend me grace. So we've considered in this series so far that sin can be defined as any failure to conform to the moral law of God.

In act, in attitude, or nature. So we can recognize that sin can be reflected in our actions. And in our attitudes.

But also in our moral nature. The internal character of who we are as individuals. And sin isn't something that we can brush off or minimize.

It has serious and eternal consequences. But thankfully, we also recognize that our sin can be forgiven by God. But only one way.

By confessing our sins and by receiving forgiveness. And that was only made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

[2 : 16] And if it's helpful to think of it this way. Respectable sins are the ones that we tend to minimize. Or disregard.

Or at the very least, tolerate. And so I have to share with you. I have a friend who has been listening to sermons.

We go back a long way. And she's been engaging in this series particularly. And she has started to give me suggestions. She said, oh, maybe next week you could do this.

Or this. And I said, well, the schedule is filled. But I said, keep giving me those suggestions.

Because they're good ones. She talked about nosiness.

And I said to myself, ooh, that's a good one. I actually found a place to slot it in. So stay tuned.

[3 : 15] I want to give us a bit of a disclaimer this morning as we begin this time together. Chances are our sermon this morning will make you uncomfortable. It likely will leave you, God willing, feeling convicted.

And aware of how today's topic shows up in your own life. In your own behavior. And in your own attitudes. Because I know it did it for me. This morning we're looking at the respectable sin of judgmentalism.

Everybody gasped. So for some of you, you may be quick to recognize that this sin is sadly evident in Christians. Right?

It's sadly evident in the church itself. If you know people in your life who have walked away from a church, what's the likely reason? Someone hurt them because they felt judged.

It's a toughie. And for some of you, you may be quick to recognize that this sin is something that we minimize.

[4 : 30] Right? Why do we judge? We're going to look at that this morning. So a short story for perspective as we begin this morning. A young couple moved into a new neighborhood.

The next morning while they were eating breakfast, the young woman sees her neighbor hanging the wash outside. That laundry's not very clean, she said.

She doesn't know how to wash correctly. Maybe she needs better laundry soap. Well, her husband looked on but remained silent. Every time her neighbor would hang her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments.

About a month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line. And she said to her husband, Look, she's learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her that.

The husband said, I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows. Judgmentalism.

[5 : 38] Sadly, it's a quality by which many people both outside and inside the church identify both Christians. And as I said, the church itself.

And I believe, friends, that that breaks God's heart. And I know it certainly breaks mine. So we're going to be taking a closer look at this together this morning as we consider the root of judgmentalism.

From judgment to judgmentalism, that path. And then our third point this morning, the speck and the plank.

So first, what's the root of judgment? Judgmentalism. What's the meaning? I'm glad Len dipped into dictionary.com because you know how much I love language, right?

So what are the meanings of the word judge and judgment? Well, before we dig into the definitions, let's recognize immediately that we get a sense of legality to that concept, don't we?

[6 : 42] Right away. A ruling passed for or against someone or something. So as a noun, a judge is a public official.

That's how we recognize it, right? Someone who is appointed to decide cases in a court of law. But what does that mean as a verb, to judge? Well, to judge is to form an opinion or a conclusion about something or someone.

So from a positive perspective, other definitions suggest the word judge means, quote, to form an opinion about something through careful weighing of evidence and testing of premises.

Seems fair, right? So can you recognize, you know me and language, can you recognize all the everyday expressions that we may use that involve the concept of judgment?

I got thinking about it and my wheels kept turning. Impaired judgment. I think your judgment might be impaired here. I think your perspective is off. Poor judgment.

[7 : 51] Wow, I think you really use poor judgment in making that decision. Snap judgment. Don't make a snap judgment. Take time to think it through. A bad judgment call.

Well, based on how that went, I guess I made a bad judgment call. And maybe from a more positive perspective, we recognize expressions like, use your best judgment.

You may say that or have it said to you. Show good judgment when you make decisions. If you have teenagers, I know many of you are, God bless you, well past that stage and they've gone on to other things.

But did you ever say to your young adults as they left the house, make good choices. Use good judgment, right? So maybe you've never stopped to think about it, but as individuals, we make literally hundreds, if not thousands, of judgments every day.

Can you recognize that? Driving. Driving is a huge one. Eating. Should I eat this? Should I not? Do I care? How and when to exercise?

[9 : 04] When to go to bed? What books to read? What shows to watch? Or not watch? We make quick judgments in the moment. Or we take longer time, longer amounts of time to make deliberate judgments.

To analyze and process. We may seek God's direction through prayer even. For big choices. I hope we do. And for more significant judgments in our lives, we hopefully even seek the insight of others. The experience of wise counsel or experience influence in our lives. Judging rightly. Maintaining a healthy and balanced perspective on judgment is critical in our lives.

So how do we transition from judgment, which seems fair, as we just looked at, to judgmentalism? Well, I've shared with you in the past that I'm usually pretty quick to extend grace to other people. I will seek to offer grace. I will seek to offer grace even when someone hurts me.

[10:15] And we need to recognize that none of us are perfect. And we need to give people the benefit of the doubt. Everyone else, friends, is just as human as you are.

You may hear me say those things and then think of me personally, extending grace, as being some kind of doormat.

If I'll keep saying, yep, it's okay. No problem. I understand. No problem. But actually, the model that I'm seeking to follow there is Jesus. And I'm not saying I've got it covered.

I'm really, really working on it. And yet, when it comes to extending grace to myself, I'm bad at that. I do it very reluctantly. But to take that perspective a step further, it can be genuinely difficult to be objective in how we judge our own actions, how we judge our own behavior, our own attitudes.

[11:20] Are you able to step outside yourself, listen to how you talk, see how you behave, and filter that in the moment? Perhaps you are, but most of us aren't.

So from that point, I think we can begin to develop a sense of self-righteousness. Where we become not only unable to objectively judge ourselves, but unable to receive healthy rebuke, healthy challenge from someone else.

From people in our lives who care about us. Who genuinely care and want to speak truth and health into our lives. But oh boy, when we begin to turn our judgment towards other people.

That's when we see the sin of judgmentalism. We talked a bit about familiar expressions we may hear. What about this one?

Maybe you've used it yourself. Don't judge me. Sound familiar at all? Don't judge me. You have no right to judge me. You don't know me. We may react in that way, even when we're called out in legitimate ways.

[12:38] Can you recognize times when that's happened to you? Someone has fairly and rightly called you out on something, and you've gotten pouty about it. Don't judge me. Don't judge me.

Don't judge me. I believe as Christians we may take a defiant stance on being judged. Things like, well, the Bible says you can't judge me. So, don't even try.

Well, here's a moment. I've been asked if I would put the references. So, I'm not going to put the full verses, because I want you to look them up. Or you can listen to me as I read them.

But I will do my best to put references, because people were saying, I'm taking too many notes. You're going way too fast. So, the intervention worked.

So, if you look at Matthew 7, verse 1, you get the perspective, do not judge, or you too will be judged.

[13:34] Matthew 7, verse 1. But don't stop there. That's not where that thought stops. It continues, for in the same way you judge others, you will be judged.

And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Not only do we tend to resist being judged by others, but we may begin to judge or be quick to judge other people.

So, not only do we resist that turned on us, we turn it back to others. And I think we may all tend to fall back on this don't judge me perspective.

Perhaps all too often, especially when we're challenged by other people. And I think this perspective may stem from a sense of within ourselves, or a conviction by the Holy Spirit, that we've wandered off God's intended path for us.

We get defensive because we're feeling convicted. So, where does this tendency to be judgmental towards other people come from?

[14:50] In his book, *The Soul of Shame*, retelling the stories we believe about ourselves, psychiatrist and author Kirk Thompson says, It's important to be aware that the act of judging others has its origin in our own self-judgment.

Thompson continues, As I often tell patients, he says, Shamed people, shame people. Long before we're criticizing others, The source of that criticism has been planted, fertilized, and grown in our own lives.

It's been directed at ourselves, and often in ways we're mostly unaware of. When we judge ourselves and fail to live up to our own unrealistic expectations, the discomfort we feel in that moment tends to veer towards judging other people.

Have you ever considered some of the measures we may seem to use when we judge other people? Well, when we're judgmental towards other people, I think that attitude is usually, and I thought about this, think about it for yourself as well, It's usually based on what?

Superficial assessments. We base our judgments, snap judgments, on someone's clothes, their speech, their cleanliness, their job, any number of superficial characteristics.

[16 : 31] And we also tend to judge people based on our opinions and our expectations, don't we?

When was the last time you came into an interaction with someone without expectations? Without a preconceived notion of how either they should respond, how they will respond?

That's a lot of weight to carry. A lot of weight to carry. And generally, when we do that, we're coming in not from an objective viewpoint at all, not from a fair, unbiased perspective, or, I'd argue, a gracious or loving attitude.

We need to recognize that when we judge other people in ways that are critical, we are being, friends, sinfully judgmental. And that actually says far more about us than it does about anyone else.

Judgmentalism, to me, reveals a heart that has been hurt. A heart that pridefully resists seeking forgiveness or seeking healing.

[17 : 51] A judgmental attitude in someone reveals and reflects that they don't see the playing field as level. It reflects, if we're being judgmental, it reflects that we're somehow seeing ourselves as better or more deserving.

Judgmentalism, I believe, also reflects a sense of entitlement. Perhaps a desire for control. But definitely, and this will blow your mind, a lack of self-esteem.

Can you recognize that? As I said before, hurt people hurt people, right? So if you're feeling down on yourself and judgmental of yourself and you've been hurt by others, rather than seeking healing, you can drift into being critical of other people and judgmental of other people.

I also read this week that judgmental people generally have three things in common. They are overly critical. They show no respect for the person they're criticizing.

And they justify what they say because they believe it's the truth. Well, the truth hurts, you know. I had to tell so-and-so. They were terrible at their job.

[19 : 21] It is what it is. Sometimes people have to hear the hard words. Where's the grace in that? Our third point this morning, the speck and the plank.

So let's return to Matthew 7. Beginning at verse 1 again, Did you catch that?

The way that you unfairly judge someone else, the attitude with which you judge them, you will ultimately be judged in the same way.

If you extend grace to others, it will be extended to you. That's what this is saying. If you criticize others and act judgmentally towards them, Jesus continues in Matthew 7, verse 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? How can you say to your brother, let me take that speck out of your eye, when all the time there's a plank in your own?

[20 : 49] You hypocrite, Jesus says. First, take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Has Jesus' metaphor here in this passage been lost on you in the past? Trying to wrap your head around it? Well, don't be too hard on him, because remember, he was a carpenter by trade, so this is a good metaphor.

What Jesus is getting at here is that being judgmental of others seeks to tear them down while building ourselves up.

It's that insecurity and that self-esteem piece again. Can you recognize that it's usually the behaviors of, this one's tough, it's usually the behaviors and attitudes or perspectives of other people that we dislike the most that we see in ourselves.

Think about that for a minute. Are the things that drive you bananas about other people actually things that you do yourself that either you can't forgive in yourself or you're not willing to forgive in someone else?

[22 : 15] Do you find it easy to excuse bad behavior in yourself while in turn calling it out in other people? My friends, Jesus is calling us out.

He's calling us to look inside first. Deal with your own stuff. Get your own house in order first before we even begin to consider what someone else may be dealing with, what someone else may be facing.

The Apostle Paul reflects on the idea of judgmentalism as well in Romans 2 verses 1 to 3 where he says, You therefore have no excuse.

You who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself. Because you who pass judgment do the same things, Paul says. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

[23 : 41] Friends, is it our place or our right to judge someone else? Well, we may look at some point in the future at how healthy communication, it can and it should, definitely involve challenging people.

Definitely in some ways, in a healthy way, we are called to judge one another. But that's done in love, not in criticism. When our behaviors and our attitudes are drifting away from God, we should be open to people we trust, people we love, people we know love us and want God's best for us. We should be open to receiving their words that are maybe not that easy to hear. So I can't do that justice this morning. That's something we may look at.

So there is healthy Christian judgment within community. And hopefully we all recognize that we will, all of us, down to the last person, face final judgment.

That judgment, friends, is a fair, it will be, a fair and objective analysis of what we've done with what God has given us.

[25 : 01] What we've done with our time, our gifts, our talents. And that final judgment will come from God alone.

So why is God the only perfect and objective judge? Well, quite simply, and maybe you're thinking this already, only God knows our heart.

We read in 1 Samuel 16, verse 7, that as Samuel is considering David, you may know the story, as Samuel is considering David to be the king of Israel, he balks at David's height, his age, the fact that he was presented, oh, oh yeah, he's, yeah, he's with the sheep, don't even worry about that kid.

But God tells Samuel, the Lord does not look at the things that man looks at. Can you recognize that? Man looks at the outward appearance, the superficial things.

But 1 Samuel 16, verse 7 says, the Lord looks at the heart. My friends, let God be the judge of the sin in someone else's life.

[26 : 24] Or, more importantly, the sin in your life. And examine yourself first in every situation.

Repent of a tendency to criticize, to judge other people. Are you a glass is half empty person? Can you recognize that in yourself this morning? Is your tendency to recognize what was missed, what was forgotten, rather than affirming another person for what they have done?

If your heart leans towards criticism and judgment, ask God to change that heart. If you see a brother or a sister that you know well, and you have a godly, hear me on this, a godly and a healthy, mutually beneficial relationship of trust with them, perhaps you can be an objective filter to challenge them on bad choices.

But my challenge for all of us is never to minimize or disregard the sin of judgmentalism. Instead, make sure your first priority is always seeking to have your own house in order.

As we close our time together this morning, I want to lead us in a prayer of commitment or, depending on your circumstances, recommitment to God in our lives.

[27 : 56] Pray this prayer with me and place your eternal destiny securely in the hands of Jesus. Let's pray. Lord Jesus Christ, I am sorry for the things that I have done wrong in my life.

Lord, for each one of us who are here this morning, I pray that your spirit will shed light on those things that are particular issues for each of us. Please forgive me, Father, for these things that have come to mind.

I now turn from everything that I know is wrong. Help me to turn from these things and back to you every day. Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.

Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your spirit. I now receive this gift. Please come into my life.

Lord, plant that flag again for those of us who planted it years ago. remind us that you are with us and that you are with us forever.

[29 : 13] Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen. So as we journey through a deeper exploration of some of the specific respectable sins together over the coming weeks, I want us to say the words of 1 John 1-9 together each week.

Ready? If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
Amen.