

Matthew 7:1-6 // Judgment and Grace

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[0:00] This morning we're going to be in Matthew chapter 7 verses 1 to 6. We're getting back into the Sermon on the Mount after our, I guess, a little bit of a bookmark as we went through Easter and Resurrection Sunday, Good Friday and such.

Now, Matthew chapter 7 verses 1 to 6. As so often happens, I have to start with a story of my failure.

I have to speak from that often because it's what the Lord teaches me through is things I should have learned, didn't learn, needed to learn, and then it's kind of a rinse and repeat sometimes depending on what it is.

So, back in Vancouver, which is my home city, there's a big, big transit system and I was riding on this transit bus to work one day.

I had my backpack and it's a pretty full bus, you know, lots of people there. And if you're not familiar, they usually have these courtesy seats on either side at the very front. And it's just for people who need to sit close to the bus driver or need some extra help physically or whatever.

[1:10] I mean, it's pretty practical stuff. And I was sitting there facing the right-hand side of the bus just a few rows back. And there was these three ladies that were sitting in the courtesy seats on the right when you're looking forward.

And the bus stops and this guy gets on. And I don't quite, even to this day, I'm not too sure how to describe it. It kind of looks like he was living in his clothes.

It was a big down parka with like the feathers kind of just really dirty down parka. And the feathers were just kind of flying off him as he walked by. It's like multiple holes, right? And he's carrying this huge duffel bag.

And he sits down opposite these ladies in the courtesy seats. So my missional reaction is, you shouldn't be there. That's not for you, right? And he puts down the duffel bag and he's sitting there. And I'm kind of thinking, something's about to go down, right?

Something's about to go down. The little of these, they're holding their purses, kind of clutching them a little tighter. You kind of see them recede back like this. I look around and you kind of can see people take a step back because they're thinking, it's a big city, something's going to happen.

[2:14] And so in my mind, you know, I'm thinking, I'm going to step up and I'm going to be a hero. And I put down my backpack and I'm just kind of readying.

I'm just kind of just watching this guy. I'm assuming that he's going to do something just totally rash and terrible. He reaches down and he unzips his duffel bag. And a part of me is like, this is it.

I'm going to be on the nightly news. You know, like I was, this is what I was thinking, right? I was just, then I was a lot younger then. But it's like, I stand up and I look back and there's people that are just kind of starting to step back.

And he reaches into this duffel bag and I'm fearing the worst here. And I will never, ever forget this visual. He pulls out a fresh cut sunflower.

And he reaches across the aisle to one of the ladies and she takes it and she starts to tear up a bit. And I'm stuck in this moment. I'm looking at this thinking, what is happening right now?

[3:13] Right? I look behind. There's a woman. She's crying. You know, there's people that are just like, you know, can you believe this? Can you believe this is happening? We're watching this. And the bus stops.

The guy gets up and he goes off and I see him walk away. And I realized the only threat on the bus was me. I was the only one thinking violence. And it serves to this day as one of those incredibly valuable lessons that I had to learn.

That maybe I'm the problem. And I can't judge others based upon how they look, how I perceive them to be, what I think their intentions are. I have to apply grace.

And it was a really, really important lesson to learn. So when I'm walking into this passage now, this is exactly the story that came to mind. There was a story that I applied judgment to a situation I should have applied grace to.

Had I been watching a little more closely, I might have seen actually more beauty in action. But what I did see changed me forever. So I'm going to start with verse 1.

[4:14] And we're going to camp on that for just a few minutes. Judge not that you be not judged. I'm not sure if you have a favorite Bible verse or not.

But I've known a lot of atheists in my time that know nothing else about the Bible, but they know this verse. Don't judge me. You can't judge me. You can't judge my life.

You can't judge anything. Doesn't your book say not to judge? Right? They know this one. This one's valuable to them. It's like weaponized against Christianity sometimes.

It's weaponized in a way that was like puts us back a second. Because it's not that they're wrong. But I think they have the wrong context sometimes. Because that's not all that Jesus was saying. If that's all he was saying, then he'd contradict himself in a few verses down the road where he's actually talking about discernment. Okay? So we'll get to that. The Christian is called to show unconditional love.

[5:13] We are called to love those people. Some that are unlovable. Not that they've earned love, but that we love them because God loves them.

Even though they may not love God. But we are not called to show unconditional approval. And there's an enormous difference between acceptance and approval.

But we should love both people. We can love people who do things the Bible doesn't approve of. And it's possible to love the sinner and hate the sin.

I'm sure you've heard that expression before. I've wrestled with this. Is this possible? Is this true?

And then I think, well, yeah, I do this to myself all the time. I hate the sin that I fall into sometimes.

But I love myself enough to have a shower in the morning or get dressed or take care of myself. Or eight, right? I love myself, but I hate my sin. It's possible to love someone and hate what they're messed up in.

[6:13] It's possible. And sometimes we want to receive, and you've probably heard this expression before, but a dump truck of grace from God for our stuff.

But then with someone else, it's like, well, here's a teaspoon. And I'm going to give it begrudgingly to you, you know. When really, we need to be practicing dump truck loads of grace. We look to ourselves.

We feel okay. But we hate something we do. We catch ourselves in a lie or a little bit of gossip. Or maybe it's something else. I don't know. I don't know what your stuff is. I don't want to know what your stuff is.

I have my own stuff to handle. But your stuff is between you and the Lord. And it's important to look at it before we start looking at other people. Had I, on that bus, taken a moment and prayed, I wonder what would have changed in my heart in that moment.

Had I just sat back and thought, you know what? I'm just going to not assume the worst here. I'm just going to wait and see what happens. I would have just been able to calmly observe beauty.

[7:17] And instead, it felt like a wholehearted rebuke. Because I was a Christian. And I was the one thinking of violence. God doesn't give us a pass to hate people who practice a particular sin.

We don't have the right to condemn someone for their sin. It's not like that. We're not judge, jury, and executioner of folks. They have their stuff they're going through. But we can love them through it.

We aren't to love the sin for the sake of the people who practice them, though. Well, I love them so much. I'm just going to accept this and affirm it.

We shouldn't do that. That takes a balance that, I'll tell you right now, I haven't figured out yet.

Because every situation, every person, it's all different. But there has to be some level of balance between loving the person and wanting them to grow beyond where they are at.

And the sin that they're stuck in. Verse 1 again. Judge not that you be not judged. So it doesn't allow examining the lives of others.

[8:23] Or it doesn't disallow that, sorry. But it doesn't allow in the spirit that it's often done. What we'll do sometimes is we'll look at someone and say, don't quite like what this is going on.

You know what I'm saying? I've come, they've come to church a certain way that I just don't like. You know? Or maybe they're having a smoke outside.

You know? Which, by the way, the Bible doesn't say anything about smoking at all. Just, you know, there's not a word of it in there. You can see that it does talk about our body being a temple.

Okay? But here's where I would be in trouble for judging someone like that. I'm fat. Okay? I could lose about 30 pounds. I really could. And I'd be doing well. Should I be talking to somebody about smoking?

No. I should get skinnier. Right? I should shed a few pounds and let this gluttony go. Right? This is kind of what I'm talking about. It's that we look at people and we say, well, I don't like that and that and that.

[9:18] But we're not looking at ourselves in the mirror and realizing maybe there's stuff we have to figure out first. Okay? And that's, I think, what the spirit of this is. Many people condemn other people and allow themselves to hate other people for their sins that they practice.

But judge not that you be not judged. And we break this command when we think the worst of someone. When we think of someone and we just say the absolute worst of this person, even if they've had a bad day, it's like, oh, man, they're just awful, awful human being.

We don't know that. Is that our right to judge? Maybe we need to just kind of settle down and get to know them a bit. Maybe just accept it. Maybe they just had some terrible news and they're having a real rough day.

So we break this rule about not judging others when we think the worst of someone. And then even worse is that any evil thing that's said about them, we agree because we're just like, we're on the hate train.

You know? It'd be exhilarating sometime. I call it the torch and pitchfork crowd. Okay? Where we just kind of get in this posse and it's like, all right, who do we hate today? You know? We have to be careful with that.

[10:30] We break this command when we only speak to someone about their faults. Now, you know, I typed out this note and I'm kind of thinking, this is from my home of origin, you know?

Right? We can get hypercritical of one another. Whenever we talk to someone, it's only about what they've done wrong. We break the rule of judging someone in this way when we only point out faults.

What good has someone done? Have you pointed that out lately? Have you shared with your kids or your parents or anybody else around you or your friends, hey, I really liked it when you did this? Or is it just this always this thing about, you know what, you could have done better? I don't know. I struggle with this sometimes. You know, I think it was Kathy that introduced me to the term attaboys, right?

And I love that term because it's true. We all every now and then need that attaboy. You did great. We're atta girl, right? Way to go. And if we're not doing that, if we're not using that term, then all we're doing is giving out negativity.

[11:37] And negativity doesn't grow a real good houseplant. It really doesn't. It needs water, light. You can even talk to your plants. They grow. So, yeah, I'm a weirdo like that.

I actually think that's true. But anyway. No, I do not have conversations with houseplants. I'm just going to lay that out right there. Sometimes I'll say something.

I realize I made a horrible mistake saying that. And that was one of them. So, anyway. We break the command when we judge an entire life by its worst moments.

It's kind of like I was mentioning before. And I'm sure you're not like me, but I have days that are just terrible sometimes. And it's because I wake up on the wrong side of the bed with the wrong heart. I'm not in the army of God. I'm just feeling woe is me about myself. And I kind of feel sorry for anybody who's going to encounter me in that next two-hour block of time. I'll go and I'll pray and I have a routine to try and get out of it and stuff like that.

[12:33] But I always wonder. It's like, man, I've got to be careful. We have to be careful when we're having a really bad day, but also when somebody else is. Give them grace. You know, sometimes that grace is just leaving them alone.

You know? All right. I can see that you're kind of going through something right now. I love you. I'm going to rally back in a couple hours. How's that? Right? We have to love people and give grace to them.

Even when we don't feel like it. Sometimes silence and sometimes just stepping back a moment and giving them an hour to cool off is an act of love. And I have to ask myself sometimes, how would you like if your life was judged on your three worst moments that you've ever had?

If you were to write your three worst moments on a piece of paper of your entire life and someone say, okay, this is your character, this is your nature, I don't like you.

Right? How cruel would that be to take our worst moments and judge us based upon that? I wouldn't want that for myself. I wouldn't want that for you either.

[13:43] Grace. We break this rule when we judge the hidden motives of other people. We have no idea what's going on in someone's head. We really don't. And sometimes getting cut off in traffic is just simply someone not watching.

It's not like, you know, oh, I hate this guy. I'm going to cut him off. It's not like that. Sometimes it's just an accident. Sometimes, and especially in a church community, when we bump into one another, it's not necessarily intentional at all.

Sometimes just stuff happens. And when we think the worst of someone's motives, we're actually breaking that rule of do not judge. Right? We're breaking that rule of judge not that you be not judged.

Another way we break this is when we judge others without considering ourselves in the same circumstances. You see someone that's done something wrong. Maybe said something offensive. Maybe they've made a mistake in some way. Put yourself in their shoes for just a moment. How would I want to be treated if I messed up like that? How would I want to be treated if I was having the worst day of my life and I just acted like an ogre and just hated on everybody?

[14:56] Would I feel terrible after that? Would I want to be loved? Would I want to be held, maybe? Would I want to be given an attaboy? Of course. So walk in someone's shoes for a moment before we pass out judgment.

Maybe they're going through things that you could never even imagine. You know, in my family, there's a saying. Okay, I better be careful with this.

In my family of birth, so when I was a kid, there was a saying, if you break your leg, you walk it off. Okay? So the compassion level at my house was pretty low down here.

There wasn't a lot of compassion. And I actually did break my leg at one point in four places. My friends carried me back up to the house. And, you know, it was funny, kind of the whole conversation with my parents.

They're more worried about what I was wearing and what that would look like at the hospital. And I've never forgotten that. I'm thinking, I just broke my leg, you know? Shouldn't this be more of a concern? Right?

[15:56] Right? Anyway. We have to be mindful of what people are going through. Because sometimes it's a lot. And we don't see it. Not everybody talks about it. I wasn't raised to talk about it in my family of origin.

And so we get used to these patterns of just putting it back on the shelf of anger back here behind our shoulder. And just suffering through. And it changes who we are. Sometimes in our personality. Sometimes the things we do, decisions we make, conversations we have. They're all through that filter of that anger of stuff we've got going on. So we shouldn't judge people until we take a moment and go through this process.

What if it were me? How would I want to be treated? What if they're going through the worst day of their life and they're making some mistakes right now that they're going to regret tomorrow? How can I love them through this?

It's not easy. But I think that's the heart of where we're supposed to go with this. In our culture, anything that we call a sin can be treated as hatred now.

[17:01] You know, in the country that I come from, it has been for a little while now, but it's increasingly, the scope of it is increasing. That if you teach from the Bible, you are teaching hate speech.

And therefore, it's an imprisonable offense. Now, nobody's gone to prison for it yet that I know of. But I've known people who have gotten letters. You know, just a reminder of the law.

We're getting to that place where to speak the truth becomes illegal. It's scary. It's crazy. It doesn't even seem true. But I came from a country where that's true right now.

And an example would be that marriage is between one man and one woman. That's hate speech. Up there. Okay. And yet, from the Bible, there's no controversy over this.

The Bible says nothing about same-sex marriage. It talks about marriage being between one man and one woman. And so there's no controversy there. But there's always controversy when we bring things like this into a social and political environment.

[18:11] It can be really, really rough. We can be judged harshly for things we believe. We can be judged harshly for the truth that's in the Bible that we stand for. And there will come a time, and I pray that not here, but there will come a time where when I teach the truth here, you might get in trouble at work.

That has already happened out there in the world. In the United States as well. There's stories of that happening. Okay. So we're in a time where we need to stick together.

And that means we need a lot of grace. We're in a time where things are going to get more and more difficult. And we need a lot of grace and understanding between one another. So judging one another, let's maybe just take a step back and think, what's it like to walk in their shoes?

What's it like to feel their experience with this world? And how can I apply more grace to that?

Verses 1 and 2. How do we do this?

I think by three things. One, truth. Biblical truth. Stick to it. Stay on it. Live in it. Dwell in it. Biblical truth. Because the opinions of culture, it ebbs and flows.

[19:36] It's up and down all the time. You've lived long enough, you've seen it go all over the place. And it's not about to stop. Christians, we need to show that love and honor to the people who disagree with us.

Wouldn't it be a lovely thing if they showed that to us? Love and honor to people who disagree with us. Wouldn't that be lovely? We need to show it to them anyways. To be patient.

To be kind. When there's offense, when there's judgment against us for what we believe and who we are, we speak the truth and we show honor and we show grace.

There's also respect. Because it's quite possible to respect someone and disagree with them.

There's people that I've known that's like I didn't agree with a single thing they said, but I respect them as a person.

I respect their education. I respected their training. I respected their journey in life. Even if I didn't quite understand how certain things lined up, you can still respect someone and not agree with them.

[20:41] And that's respect we need to give as well. And the third thing, which is just as important as any of the others, humility. Because if we get high and mighty in our assessment of others, well, that's...

Jesus calls that hypocrisy. Okay. Approach people with humility. Approach people with grace.

That's exactly how we would want it to be if we were the ones making the mistakes.

We need to speak with truth, respect, and humility. But even if we do all of this, some people may reject us. But at least we've done our part to speak the truth.

Verse 2. For the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. So Jesus didn't stop us from judging others.

He didn't stop us from having discernment. He's just saying, just be really careful how you dole this out. Okay. You want dump trucks of grace applied to your life?

[21:46] Apply dump trucks of grace to others. Use that as a measure. If you're going to show no mercy, no grace, no forgiveness, why are you expecting it yourself? That's a challenging thing to consider.

We haven't always done well in this. Sometimes, I brought this up a little bit in our Sunday school prior, sometimes we look at the homosexuality or homosexuality or the homosexual community and we'll just say, oh, worst of the worst, right?

I've heard of churches put placards and attend a gay soldier's funeral and picket that.

I mean, I want an unloving, horrible thing to do. Because I have to wonder. Okay, gentlemen, raise your hands. Those of you who've had premarital sex, caught in adultery, or you struggle with pornography, how is homosexuality a sin any different from any of those three?

Right? Judge not, lest you be judged. So sin is sin is sin in the eyes of God. We have to be incredibly careful when we levy judgment out to others.

[23:06] We have to look strong in the mirror and say, okay, where is my heart at right now? Lord, is there something I need to repent from? If I'm feeling called to talk to a brother and sister about something I see them going through, do a self-analysis first.

Father, what am I struggling with? And I'm going to pray for this person. And maybe or maybe not, I'm the person to talk to them. Maybe it's somebody else. We have to be careful with this. Because there's always this tendency to measure to someone else with a teaspoon of grace. But we want the dump truck for ourselves. Verses 3 to 5.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there's a log in your own eye?

You hypocrite. First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. This was a funny illustration. Jesus isn't being literal.

[24:06] He's not talking about actually having a log in your eye. Okay. There's actually humor there. And I love this about him. He's saying that the log in your own eye, take it out and deal with that stuff first.

This is the self-analysis. So if you see someone struggling with something, don't rush to it. Rush to yourself. And look and say, okay, Lord, I see this in this other person's life.

Do I see this because this is a part of what I do too? Am I recognizing in their life something I need to confess? Right? Father, help me to understand this because I don't want to cause harm in this person by causing judgment.

I don't want to do that. I want to actually help them. I want to love them through this. But maybe this is something I need to get right first, Lord. Jesus didn't say that you're not allowed to care about your brother's speck.

And, you know, if you're in a discipleship relationship, if you're in a strong friendship or if you're in a marriage, if you're in any kind of close proximity where you've earned the right to ask, what the heck sometimes?

[25:16] Okay? Then say it. But do it out of love, not out of criticism, not out of critique. And again, treat your brother or sister or your friend or whomever they are with the same amount of grace that you want to receive.

And approach it like that. Because there are some relationships that you can call things out. I've had many relationships like that. People I've disciplined or been disciplined by.

Where it's okay to walk up and say, you know, this hot mess that you are right now, not grooving with it. What is going on? You know? And I know they mean it from a place of love.

I know that because they've walked with me through my life for a little while. They've earned the right to speak into my life. When I used to do street ministry quite a bit in Vancouver, there was this guy named John.

And he was bigger than me. He was a really big native guy. And we used to walk together quite often. And he was one of those guys where he wasn't homeless, but he was in a single resident occupancy, which means that you're really, you're on the poverty line or below.

[26:18] Okay? This is, so his life was on the street. He had nothing to do. He was on disability and all kinds of things. And, you know, he comes up to me one day. And we're going for a walk. And he shows me these things around the city and shows me this, you know, there was this church that was out there.

And they were giving out Bibles and bananas. Okay? And I was looking. I was thinking, well, this is great. They're leading worship. They're doing all kinds of stuff. I mean, my initial thought was, hey, this is like, this is great.

This is really good. And then John looks at me and he says, you know what? I want to show you something else. And he walks me down the street and around the corner to one of these very, very common in the area, like just basically a little street market that's a pop-up.

And you know one of the things they were selling? Bibles and bananas. People were walking around the street, going down, selling it, and going back to the corner, buying a five rock of meth, and then going eaten high. And John said, like, you don't know what we need.

You haven't taken the time to get to know us. You haven't made this a priority to understand what our life is like. You've assumed we need certain things, but we don't. And then, with a very big hand, pokes my chest in a way that I've never been poked before.

[27 : 30] I need you to know that you need me as much as I need you. And I never forgot that. Because when we drop the judgment seat, when we get off of that place, we start to realize we need each other.

Not what we think the other person needs. It takes time to earn the right to speak into someone's life. It really does. It takes time to earn the right to love someone to say the hard things.

John knew that. I knew that. We hung out quite a while. And I had earned the right to speak into his life. But he also earned the right to speak into mine. The funny thing is, I didn't realize it until that day.

So, let us lower the gavel of judgment. And let's pick up the heart of grace. When we come into those situations, realize it takes time.

So, let's not be so quick to judge. Let's be quick to grace. And if the Lord calls you to show that your brother or sister has a speck in their eye, pray about it.

[28 : 41] And look in the mirror first. Because if you've got a log hanging out of yours, that's all they're going to see. Right? So, it's something to consider. Verse 6. Now, Jesus warned us against being judgmental and blindly criticizing other people.

He's not telling us to turn off discernment. He's not telling us to be completely blind. He's telling us to use wisdom. We have to be careful with where we cast our inner parts, our hearts, and where we put them out.

We do. We have to be careful with that. And if somebody that you've been speaking to about the gospel is just a closed door, just recognize that maybe, just maybe, you're not the person that's going to lead them to Christ.

It's the Holy Spirit's job. And he may bring other people. Maybe you're just a chapter in this story. And that's okay. You can live your life. Because when we judge people based on just the outward stuff, okay, it can lead us to a certain conclusion.

And often we wrongfully think different and bad things about them. Whether it's their worst day or their best day. So, how do we do this? Galatians 5, verses 22 and 23.

[30 : 08] The fruit of the Spirit. This is how we do it. And it's not something we can say, oh, I am a loving person. No, no, no. It's a journey. You're working on being a loving person.

You can't say, well, I'm a joyful person. No, you're working on being joyful. It's like someone saying, I'm humble. No, you're not. The moment you say that, you're not. We're working on humility. And I strongly believe that Christians that are maturing in their faith are working on being more loving, joyful, peaceful, kind, self-controlled, patient, faithful.

Right? All of these things. All these fruit of the Spirit. You can see the evidence of that. The breadcrumbs of that in people's lives. That love the Lord and are submitted to Him. So, we can use discernment without judgment in that way.

And if somebody comes to you and they're just this joyful, loving, kind, patient person. They're so gentle in their communication. They come up and say, hey, you know, I've been praying for you and there's just something I feel like the Lord wants me to talk to you about.

I would sit down and like, anything. What is it? But if someone comes up and they're rude and they're brash and they've been wholly negative, I'm going to stand there and go, not feeling safe here.

[31 : 24] Right? So, it all comes down to our heart condition. How we approach people. Because there's a difference between verses 1 and 2 and verse 6 in this passage. Okay?

Verse 6 is using that discernment. Be careful. Be careful. Use Galatians 5 verses 22 and 23 as a great gauge for ourselves.

If you ever wonder, well, what should I be working on to grow closer to the Lord? That. Use his truth in your life to carve that out, to grow that in you. Well, how do we assess where someone's at in their lives?

Well, first off, that's God's job. But these are easy things to look for. Is this a joyful person? Is this a loving person? Are they growing in patience more and more?

Are they kind? You know, whenever I've done weddings, sometimes people want me to teach from 1 Corinthians 10-13. Or, sorry, 1 Corinthians 13.

[32 : 24] And it's like the way of love, right? And it's like love and patience are the two pillars of love. And it goes that, you know, love is patient, love is kind. I don't know. Kind of like love and kindness. These are the two things that are pillars to this whole idea of love.

And everything else spills beyond that and down from there. So, when we are working ourselves in our lives, let's use these verses, these passages of what our life should look like as a maturing Christian.

Not a mature Christian. Maturing Christian. Are you loving? Are you joyful? Are you peaceful? Are you patient? Are you kind? Are you faithful? Are you self-controlled?

All of these things. So, when someone comes to you and they're like that, it's easier to hear from them, isn't it? Listen to the Holy Spirit. If a person is hardened, it's better to stop.

Just trust God that he knows what he's doing. He does this better than us. And his Holy Spirit is on the job. And then we just simply need to live out a life where we shine his light on a day-to-day basis.

[33 : 31] And if people are to judge us, let them judge us for how Christian we are being. Let them judge us for how closely we live towards the Bible. Oh, they are so patient.

It drives me nuts. I would love to be judged like that. Right? Wouldn't that be lovely? As opposed to, man, they are impatient. There's a difference there. Love them and live it out.

But let God do the rest. Truth, respect, and humility is how we can love this dead and dying world. And we'll hope that they give it to us as well. Because when the night does get darker, the light does shine brighter.

So be the light. Be the light. Let's pray. Let's pray. let's pray.