

Consistent Love

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[0 : 00] May God bless that reading from his holy word as we see the title of our sermon this evening, Consistent Love. Perhaps it would have been better even to have said, Consistent Christ-like Love.

And there are points to follow this evening, the harmful attitude that Jesus indicates in his first part of the reading that we read in the Judge Not That You Be Not Judged.

The hypocrite denounce, the hypocrite who sees the speck of dust in another eye and yet won't see the beam of wood in his own eye. And then the heart assessed.

Where truly is our heart before God. Consistent love of us, we might say, consistent Christ-like love. Well, as we've been seeing, Jesus has been teaching his followers what it means to live in the kingdom of God.

What it means to live in that kingdom and not be led by an arrogant, self-centered heart, but to be led by the spirit of love for God and love one for another.

[1 : 14] It's that love that reflects the love of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's that Christ-like love. That love that gives. That love that denies self.

That love that shows forth our commitment to serve the one true God and to love others as ourselves. And it's that love that Jesus teaches us here.

That love that's radical love. It's love seen even towards those who are the enemies of the gospel, as we noticed last Lord's Day evening.

What of that love between believers? What of that love expressed and shown within the kingdom of God? How do we practice that love, the love of Jesus, towards those who are our neighbours?

And to carry on with the element of questioning, what's the consistent measure of that love? How do you profess Jesus?

[2 : 15] You who profess Jesus, how do you show that love, the love of Christ? How do you show that love to others? How do you show that your life isn't a hypocritical, two-faced kind of existence?

How do you show that your life isn't a life of inconsistency and love? That inconsistency that, you know, professes love for Jesus and yet denies that love in a judgmental and condemning heart towards others, even others within the kingdom of God.

Well, Jesus gives us the answer to these questions. He gives us the answer here in this sermon.

He tells of the evidence of that consistent Christ-like love that shows a heart, a heart that's centred in the Lord Jesus himself.

A love that's utterly consistent in a believer's love for God and love one to another. And it's for you and for me who profess the name of the Lord Jesus to be consistent in that love, to be consistent in expressing a Christ-like love to others.

So as Jesus continues here in this sermon, what do we notice? Well, we notice that he begins with a negative. What's not to be the practice of somebody who professes the name of Jesus and yet acts contrary to all that that name reveals of the loving Savior?

[3 : 51] And then as Jesus starts from the negative, he goes on to the positive. What should, what must be demonstrated in the life of the person who truly does know the Lord Jesus as Savior and seek to follow him with all his heart.

So what do we notice then in Jesus' teaching here? Well, as we said, the first heading that we saw, we see a harmful attitude. Judge not, and you will not be judged.

Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. So what's Jesus teaching here? Well, surely Jesus is commanding his followers, his disciples, to stop that habitual fault finding.

You know, the practice that we can so easily be prone to exercise in regard to our neighbor and even towards a fellow believer.

Jesus is prohibiting that spirit, that regular spirit of negativity. That spirit that we can so easily fall into, that spirit of condemning others, finding fault in others.

[5 : 05] That destructive spirit that's even within the household of faith. And that spirit, that attitude that's so harmful, so destructive, even within the community of God's people, the community of believers.

And listen again to Jesus' words here. And as you listen to these words, ask yourself in the privacy of your own heart, ask yourself, am I like that?

Am I that judge that Jesus is saying we ought not to be? Am I harboring a condemning attitude against any of my fellow Christians?

Whether these believers are in my own fellowship or in another fellowship. And if there is that element, even tiny element of destructive attitude within your heart.

That attitude that seeks to harm rather than love. Well, pray. Pray that God will forgive you. Pray in that prayer of repentance. That God will restore you.

[6 : 10] Seek the forgiveness of God. And do it. Do it now. Because, you know, whenever somebody nurtures a destructive attitude of heart, all that that does is spoil that believer's walk with the Savior.

And spoil the fellowship in which that believer lives in. It can only damage the body of Christ for that habitual spirit of judgmentalism and condemning attitude prevails.

Things about trouble in your own heart, as Jesus goes on to say. As you see in the passage here, there are consequences.

Consequences for the person who maintains that judgmental spirit. As we saw there, there's the negative attitude first of all. Judge not, and you will not be judged.

Condemn. Condemn not, and you'll not be condemned. Because, ask yourself, who alone is judge? Well, it's God. Who alone has the right and the authority to condemn?

[7 : 21] Well, again, it's God. And God will act against the judgmental and condemnatory individual. And God will act in his justice.

You know, whenever a person assumes a kind of a self-given authority to judge and condemn, God will not permit that attitude to go unpunished.

In other words, those who judge others, those who condemn others, will find that they themselves will be judged and condemned by God. Because if your standard of life is to fault find, God will find fault with you.

And God will give to you a punishment that fits the sin of your heart. See, Jesus is teaching here that God will bring to judgment the standards that I've used, you've used in judging others.

Now, remember this, and let's be absolutely clear here. If you're a Christian, if you're a Christian for whom Jesus died on the cross to save, God will never pronounce you condemned to everlasting destruction, to everlasting perdition.

[8 : 38] No, you are saved and saved eternally. You have that guarantee of eternal life in Christ. But at the same time, the person who's so inconsistent in his love for God and for others, well, Jesus tells us here, that person will be judged.

And the measure that God will use in judgment will be the standard that we've set for others.

Christians will be pardoned. Yes, we have that absolute guarantee that our sins are forgiven in Christ.

Yes, even including the sins of our passing judgment on others. But remember, your salvation is guaranteed, and your salvation may well be that of the believer, who as Amos tells us in Amos 4 in the Old Testament, salvation as firebrands plucked from the burning.

As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3, as one escaping from the flames. But there's a positive. There's a positive to rejoice in.

For Jesus goes on in this teaching, forgive, and you'll be forgiven. Give, and it'll be given to you. You see that pattern of life of the Christian?

[9 : 55] You reap what you sow. If you live a life that's always judging others, you're always condemning others, you'll find that God returns to you his judgment and his condemning.

And that judging and condemning is always righteous. But if you harbour a forgiving spirit, you lead a life that forgives others, others the pain, even the hurt that's done against you, and you forgive others, and that is, as it were, the default position of your life in forgiving others in Christ.

You'll know the blessedness of God. You'll know God's forgiven you. So Jesus tells us here, if you've got a heart that seeks to give, to give in love, to give of yourself towards others, then you'll be showing a life that truly does go the second mile.

And in that, you'll know God's giving to you of his love, of his kindness, of his blessing, of his presence, of his peace.

As Jesus said to his disciples on another occasion, we read often in John 14, not as the world gives, do I give to you. And it's that giving that the Lord gives, that Jesus tells us here in these words, give, and it'll be given to you.

[11 : 20] And it's illustrated in that little saying that Jesus gives us here in verse 38. With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

And Jesus is using an example from the time when grain was collected and grain was put into the fold of an outer garment. Somebody would stand with the garment, this outer garment, and with the large fold of the garment.

And grain was poured into that garment. And as the grain was measured out, as it was poured in, it was pressed down in order that the more grain be given to that person, even to the extent that grain would be, as it were, overflowing from that person's possession.

In other words, that expression of generosity. And Jesus is using this illustration to tell us of the generosity of God's love. Love towards the person who shows a consistency of Christ-like love. The person who forgives in love. The person who gives in love. And the person who does so, seeking nothing in return.

[12 : 32] And yet, and yet is given so much from our Heavenly Father, of the Lord, our God, who gives and gives and gives again. And we can say with David in Psalm 23, of that blessing, when he said, my cup runs over.

I'll pray that you'll know the overflowing love of God towards you. As God gives to you out of the generosity of his love. So that you can truly say, your cup runs over with God's goodness and love. Well, as we continue then in the passages, we see the wisdom that Jesus is teaching here. As he's teaching on consistent love.

Well, he gives another illustration. He, this time, gives us a little parable. I'm sure it's a parable we've all heard in different contexts. The wording may have changed slightly in our, the way of understanding, can the blind lead the blind?

Well, as Jesus tells us here in the right context, can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher.

[13 : 46] Surely what, what Jesus is teaching here is that those who judge, those who condemn, well, they're just like, like blind people, blind people trying to, to direct other blind people.

And of course, that in itself is a, is a foolish endeavor. He's a person who can't see. He can't possibly lead others who, who themselves can't see. And in the same way, bringing that application to what Jesus is teaching us here.

People, you know, people who assume a, a spiritual superiority over others. Well, Jesus is saying that they're in fact blind. Blind to their own sins.

And that kind of person, these people can't lead others. And just as in Jesus' day, when, when a learner wasn't above his teacher in knowledge, well, until that person, that young disciple, that young follower had been fully trained.

So nobody should assume any kind of superiority over another who's, well, the superior, the superiority that we sometimes think we have even over our Lord and Savior.

[14 : 59] You see, when any of us pass judgment on somebody else, well, we're assuming a position of authority that's not ours to have.

It's only the Lord Jesus has that authority as judge. Don't we fall so easily into that trap of judging and condemning others? We do it in our hypocrisy.

Well, as Jesus goes on to illustrate here in that well-known parable of the speck and the log, the speck of dust in somebody's eye and they'll beam the log in the other eye.

Let's look at the teaching here, the teaching that Jesus teaches regarding hypocrisy denounced verses 41 to 44.

You can read it before, you can read it again. Let's just see what Jesus is telling us here. Because Jesus is illustrating here how harmful and how destructive a judgmental attitude can be, even in the

fellowship that believers have or should have.

[16:05] And Jesus is giving us here what we might call a, well, a humorous picture, a humorous picture of the self-righteous individual, the person who's so prone to see the faults of others that he doesn't even see the greater fault in himself.

He doesn't even see the sin within his own heart because he's so prone to see the sin in someone else's heart. And you see in this illustration here, Jesus is, well, he's giving us an absurd situation. Here's this individual, this grotesque looking individual, this man who comes with a big plank in his eye, a big plank of wood that's sticking out of his eye.

And he comes to somebody else, another person. he's got a tiny grit of sawdust in his eye.

Obviously, they've been working in a carpenter shop and, you know, the tiny speck of dust that's gone into this other person's eye.

Something you'd hardly notice unless you're right up to that other person's face. And the person with the plank of wood in his eye doesn't even see his own appearance, doesn't see how grotesque and absurd he looks when he's so concerned about the tiny speck of dust in the other person's eye.

[17:22] And, you know, I can just see the disciples listening to Jesus, teaching this, giving this illustration, and just smiling in their faces as they're using their imagination to see this almost this absurd situation that Jesus is telling us here.

But it's a vivid illustration because it is so ridiculous. But isn't that the whole point of this illustration here? it's so absurd for a believer, a fellow believer, to be so constant in picking holes in another Christian's weaknesses, failings, for his own sins.

So often they're far, far worse. You know, a shorter catechism tells us that there are some sins more heinous, more evil than others.

and even, surely the sin even of being censorious, you know, censuring a brother or sister in Christ for whom Christ died, that itself surely is a serious and grievous sin against God.

Of course, all sin is sin. But we've got to be in our guard not to be immune from the sin of putting other people down, we might say.

[18:42] You know, God sees our hearts. God sees my heart. He sees your heart. And God will judge each one of us for all the times when we've judged others, when we've condemned fellow believers, even when our own sins are far, far worse.

C.S. Lewis put it like this, all the worst pleasures are purely spiritual. The pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing.

The pleasure of power, the pleasure of hatred. That's what Jesus surely is teaching us here in this illustration. Jesus is teaching that a judgmental attitude actually makes us blind to our own sins.

I mean, in that illustration, Jesus was showing what that judgmental attitude looks like. It's that man who's so blind to the big log of wood that's sticking out of his own eye.

He's so intent of removing the tiny fleck of dust in the other person's eye in that log he doesn't even notice. And Jesus is telling us of what that attitude is of the person who has that log in his own eye.

[19:58] The attitude is one of hypocrisy. One of hypocrisy. Because when I harbor a condemning attitude, a condemning thought, condemning words against a fellow believer, I'm a hypocrite.

I'm not genuine. I'm just play-acting as being a Christian. Hiding behind a mask of respectability when all the time I'm worse than the one whom I'm passing judgment on.

And that's a challenge to each one of us to come before God and yes, to come before God in repentance for all the times we've had these logs of wood as it were, these sins within our own heart that we don't see and don't recognize when all the time we're seeing the sin in another person's life.

Come before God in repentance for these times of hypocrisy in our own lives. You see, Jesus in that parable tells us that see, the hypocrite had his priorities wrong.

See, he was so concerned about the sins of others that he forgot to deal with his own sins. And so it's what we're asked to do, to take the log out of our own eyes.

[21:16] Yes, recognize the enormity of sin within our own hearts. Yes, come before God seeking his forgiveness and in seeking that forgiveness, knowing the healing power of a loving and forgiving God.

Yes, then you might be able to deal with the speck of dust as it were in another person's eye because we have that responsibility to help a fellow believer when a believer is caught in a particular sin, for example.

As the psalmist said, let a righteous man strike me. It's a kindness. Let him rebuke me. It's oil to my head. And let's do that with wisdom and with love.

Yes, as we seek to bring others to that position, yes, of recognizing sin within our own heart, but first, come before God with that sin in your own heart.

And so, we learn from Jesus' illustration here. We learn that the church of the Lord Jesus, the church where the Lord's people profess the name of Christ, is the church that shows Christ-like love, Christ-like acceptance, Christ-like forgiveness in our relations one with another.

[22 : 36] Yes, when you accept someone, well, we don't excuse their sin. We can't excuse sin in our own hearts. but none of us has any right to stand in judgment over a brother or sister in Christ.

Let's have not an iota of a judgmental attitude in our heart against any fellow believer in the Lord Jesus. Let's look to yourself, examine your own heart, and yes, come before God and pray, see if there's any offensive way within me and lead me in the way everlasting.

And so we do seek with God's grace and God's strength for God to remove these beams of sin within our own hearts. You see, at the root of that arrogant judgmentalism, well, at the root of that is the heart, is ourselves who we are, who we truly are within ourselves.

It really takes us to this final point here, a heart assessed. as Jesus says, for no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit, for figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

[24 : 08] And we've certainly mentioned on more than one occasion the heart of man, you know, in relation to whether a person is consistent or inconsistent in his love to God and to one another.

You see, Jesus is emphasising here how crucial it is for a person's heart to be right with God. and it's so important that you realise that who you are, as it were, your spiritual core, who you are and you're being who you are, it really is so crucial to know who you are in your heart and you're living in the kingdom of God.

Because what you are and who you are before God in heart will indicate whether you truly do have a sincere and humble relationship with God or whether indeed you are or I am a hypocrite.

Jesus said elsewhere, Jesus said in, as we read in first, in Matthew 15, Matthew 15, 19 to 20, out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

These are what defile a person. comes out of the heart. And in the context here of Jesus teaching on forbidding of judging and the hypocrisy, well, you see the logic, the logic's clear.

[25 : 44] The heart here, the heart can be compared to a tree, a fruit tree, a good tree, a tree that's well nourished and nourished and good soil that's well rooted. That tree is going to produce good fruit.

But a bad tree, a tree that doesn't have the nutrients, the rootedness and good soil, that tree is going to produce rotten, inedible fruit. Bring that in its application.

A person who's rooted in the gospel. You who build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ, the rock that's Jesus. You're being fed by the word of God, the word of truth.

And in being fed, you're going to produce goodness in your life. You're going to speak words that build one another up. You're going to speak words and by action show that you are intent to restore and to heal and to build one another up.

And you're not going to use words in judgment or condemnation, but you're going to show that your heart truly is right with God, even in forgiving love. You won't be the kind of person that's judgmental and condemning of others.

[26 : 57] You're not going to have a false, arrogant superiority. On the other hand, the person whose life isn't rooted in the life-giving gospel of Jesus, the person who builds his life on well and sand, he won't produce the fruit of goodness.

He won't love others. His heart won't be right with God and he'll act contrary to the love of God in Christ. And instead of loving and forgiving, he'll judge and condemn.

And so I ask you on what or on whom are you building your life? Are you like the tree that's mentioned in Psalm 1, the tree that's planted by the river, the tree that's secure, that tells of the person whose life is nourished by the water of life, the Lord Jesus?

Are you yielding your fruit and season as the psalm goes? Are you like the bad tree here that Jesus warns against, the tree that produces no good fruit?

This tree here that speaks of someone who's got no foundation in the Lord Jesus? Well, if that speaks of yourself, turn to the Lord Jesus and build your life in him and know that in your coming to him in repentance, that you come in repentance and have that assurance that your sins will be forgiven and you won't be condemned because Jesus took the punishment that you deserve, that I deserve.

[28 : 38] He took that punishment on the cross. And for you who do know salvation, salvation in the Lord Jesus, and I plead with you as I speak to myself, be consistent in Christ-like love.

Love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind and your neighbour as yourself. Show the love of the Lord Jesus, show that love, show it to others, show it in practice, show it daily and be as that good tree, be as that good tree in producing good fruit.

And yes, be somebody who nourishes others, someone who refreshes others, somebody who doesn't judge and condemn but forgives, somebody who builds up the fellowship of the body of Christ and does so for the glory of God and the good of others.

Amen. Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we have to confess that many times we have acted in judgment and condemnation against others when we fail to see the log in our own eye and instead of focused on the speck of dust in another eye.

Lord, forgive us our sins, cleanse us from all our unrighteousness, our unrighteousness. Forgive us, Lord, for living lives that have been so hypocritical.

[30 : 07] Forgive us, Lord, when we have not shone with the light of the Lord Jesus. So teach us, Lord, how to live, how to live to your glory and praise.

Help us, Lord, so to do in your strength and for your glory. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.