

Matthew 7:1-12

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[0 : 00] So our sermon text tonight is Matthew chapter 7. Let me invite you to go there with me. We've been looking at the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount this summer. This is probably one of the most famous sections of Jesus' teaching.

And tonight we're looking at chapter 7, verses 1 through 12. So let me invite you to go there with me. That's page 812 in the Pew Bible, if you want to turn there. If you didn't bring a Bible with you, page 812. If you don't own a Bible, feel free to take that Bible with you tonight for your own study, for your own reading.

We'd be glad for you to have one. So Matthew chapter 7, verses 1 through 12. Jesus teaches his disciples this. He says, Judge not that you be not judged.

For with the judgment you pronounced, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 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 is the 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.

[1 : 11] Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Or which one of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him?

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. Let's pray.

God, we thank you for your word. And as we've just heard, we want to ask and seek and knock that you would open up this passage for us by your spirit. Lord, and bless the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts.

[2 : 11] God, would it be pleasing in your sight, we pray. Amen. So chapter seven. So at this point in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is opening up, as you probably noticed, a new topic, a new section.

The Sermon on the Mount starts back in chapter five. And in that chapter, really as a whole, Jesus is showing us how the life lived in his kingdom of grace fulfills the Old Testament law.

Over and over and again, he's showing us how the life that he's come to bring is really the fulfillment of all of God's promises. And then in chapter six, Jesus went on to show us two things about being his follower.

In the first half of chapter six, he showed us how being his follower makes us very different than the religious people in our age. He says that our spirituality isn't about sort of trumpeting our righteousness to be seen by others.

Instead, it's actually an intimate walk, an intimate relationship with God as our father. And then in the rest of chapter six, he shows us how being his follower makes us very different, not just from the religious people, but from the irreligious people.

[3 : 16] He shows us that our ambition isn't about building up treasures on earth and trying to fight away that residual sense of worry and anxiety that we have by building up earthly material wealth.

He says, no, your ambition is to seek first the kingdom and his righteousness. So Jesus in chapter six has just finished teaching us how we have a whole new spirituality and a whole new ambition. He's shown us how we're totally different from the religious and the irreligious. And now in chapter seven, he's showing us what relationships are meant to look like for his followers. how we ought to live our life together as those who've been brought into God's kingdom by his grace. And we need someone to teach us about relationships, right? Because relationships are hard. We step on each other's toes. We offend each other. We hurt each other. We ignore each other. We try to build friendships and they fail. [4 : 22] We try to build marriages and they get rocky and they get bitter. We try to build churches and they split. Relationships are hard, right? I don't think any of us here tonight, if we're being honest, would say that relationships are just an easy breezy thing and that we've never encountered difficulty.

If that's you, if you're thinking that, I have nothing else to say to you tonight. No, I'm just kidding. I challenge you to look a little more deeply at your life, at your heart. I think it's clear from this passage that Jesus doesn't presuppose that life in his kingdom is going to be all rosy, right? He knows that there will be offenses committed, wills crossed, feelings hurt. There will be sin that has to be addressed. Relationships are hard. But if relationships are hard, we know that they're incredibly important at the same time, right?

I mean, in a certain sense, life is about relationships. Relationship with one another, relationship ultimately with God. This is how God created us.

He made us to live in community. And that means to live in relationship with flesh and blood other people. Because in doing so, isn't there something deeply spiritual about that?

[5 : 39] As we live in relationship, aren't we bearing the image of our triune God? The one God who eternally exists in a threefold relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God himself, this is what we confess, is an essentially relational God. That even without the world, God existed in a perfect, loving, holy relationship.

And for that fact alone, aren't our relationships, which are a picture of that, incredibly important?

Aren't they freighted with a spiritual significance that we often underestimate?

But even more, I would say that relationships are important because I think that loneliness is one of the great pressing problems for us today, isn't it?

Think about it. Even more so in our technological age when we can feel digitally connected to everyone and really connected to no one. And out of that loneliness, out of that lack, or perceived lack, of meaningful relationships spring a whole host of further problems in our life.

[6 : 54] Just look at your own life. When you're lonely, aren't those some of your hardest times? Not just emotionally, but spiritually, morally.

So relationships are critically important, and yet as we've said, they're incredibly hard. And so we need help. And that's where our passage comes in.

Here's what relationships will look like, Jesus says, in my kingdom. This is how you live under my reign of grace. And this is how you're going to be, you, my disciples, my followers, my church, this is how you're going to be a picture to the world of a renewed humanity.

Under my loving rule, by my spirit. And in our passage tonight, Jesus makes three big points about relationships, and we're going to walk through each one. The first one's this.

And they're simple points. The first one's this. Don't judge. Verses one through five. Let's read them again. Judge not, that you not be judged.

[8 : 04] For with the judgment you pronounced, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 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 is the 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.

Now, what does Jesus mean when he says, don't judge? Does he mean that we should never distinguish between what's right and good for us and what's wrong and bad for us?

Should anything go in God's kingdom? Well, no, right? He clearly doesn't mean that. Okay, so let's go one step further. Does Jesus mean that we should never look into the life of another person and point out what's right in their life and good for them and what's wrong in their life and bad for them?

Should we never do that according to Jesus? Isn't that what a lot of people mean when they say, don't judge? It's amazing. I think there was a time when John 3.16 was the most known passage in the Bible.

[9 : 12] I think Matthew 7.1 is probably the most well-known passage in the Bible right now. Anybody in the street, don't judge. Right? Is Jesus saying we should never get that personal, that engaged, that into one another lives?

Well, I think it's clear from the end of verse 5 that we actually should be doing that. We should be helping to take the specks from our brother or sister's eye.

We should be looking into their life and helping them to see how they can change and become more like Christ. So then, what exactly does Jesus mean when he says, don't judge?

Well, I think it's clear that he's forbidding. What he's forbidding here is a judgmental heart. A condemning attitude. The heart that in pride looks at another brother and sister in Christ and condemns them for sin in their life.

This is the kind of heart that Jesus is forbidding here. This is the kind of heart that sees a brother or sister struggling or failing and says, you call yourself a Christian? How could you do something like that?

[10 : 23] And then, begins to exclude them or cut them out because of that struggle or failing. I'd never go to church with someone like that. And what Jesus is saying is that sort of judgmental spirit should have no place in the community of disciples.

Flat out. You know, perhaps you've been in a church that's plagued by that sort of attitude. What Jesus says in verse 2 is that that sort of heart attitude will grow like wildfire in a community. You'll judge and it will come right back at you. You'll measure someone up and suddenly you'll find yourself being measured up. And what happens is that what gets created is this sort of great big feedback loop where over time all that gets heard in the community is this obnoxious noise of condemnation as I condemn you and you condemn me and it grows in this loud obnoxious hum and that's all we hear rather than the peaceful song of the gospel.

Maybe you've seen this in churches. It's sad. It's damaging not just to the people involved. It's damaging to the reputation of Christ. Maybe you've seen it in marriages this kind of judgmental attitude where a couple sort of starts out well in their relationship but man over time they just end up tearing one another down and hammering on one another and condemning each other's performance.

Sometimes it starts out in seemingly innocent sort of banter or a sarcastic attitude or sort of a sarcastic joking remark and then it ends up growing into the deafening noise of judgment and condemnation and suddenly this marriage this relationship is like a battleground with one side just bombing the other with an increasingly short fuse and an increasingly quick trigger finger.

[12 : 24] but Jesus says no this isn't what it will look like for you. You won't be self-appointed judges casting your verdict of condemnation on everyone who happens to slip up.

No you will be not proud judges but you are going to be humble soul spiritual surgeons helping each other loving each other in the struggle against sin.

Jesus says first take the log out of your own eye and that's an amazing word picture we're kind of familiar with it but it's you know I wonder if the first time Jesus used that analogy that people actually had to laugh because it's such a ridiculous image isn't it?

I mean think about it imagine someone marching around condemning people for having specks in their eye while a giant beam is waving around in theirs I mean it's like something out of Monty Python right?

Walking around saying let me take that speck out of your eye after they keep knocking people over with this rafter that's protruding from their face it's absurd it's ridiculous and Jesus is saying it's about as ridiculous as a judgmental Christian take the log out of your own eye first you know realizing that I've got a log immediately makes you humble doesn't it?

[13 : 55] it gets you off the bench the judge's bench and if you take it out with the help of others no doubt then it doesn't just make you humble but it makes you helpful you'll be able to actually then turn around and do the gentle work of loving and correcting and restoring a brother or sister who's stuck in sin and this teaching it just runs throughout the New Testament one example the apostle Paul picks up on Jesus' teaching as he writes his letter to Galatia to the churches in Galatia Galatians chapter 6 verse 1 says this brothers and sisters that is he's writing to the church just like Jesus here in the Sermon on the Mount you notice how many times Jesus has brothers in this

paragraph he's talking about the church this is an in-house issue brothers and sisters if anyone is caught Paul says that is if they're stuck in any transgression you who are spiritual that is you who have the Holy Spirit who know what it's like to have the log taken out of your eye which should be all of us you who are spiritual should restore them in a spirit of gentleness that's our marching order when we look at our brothers and sisters in Christ as we do life together and as we inevitably see sin in their lives specks in their eyes

Jesus would say that will trip them up that will irritate them that might eventually blind them as we see those specks in their eyes Jesus says you don't stand over them and proudly judge them nor do you ignore them and walk the other way no you come alongside them and you work to gently restore them now imagine imagine if that's what people found when they spent time in our community here if that's what people knew to be true of Trinity of our gatherings on Sundays of our small groups in particular where we can get to know one another a little more deeply of our one-to-one friendships and relationships that flow out of our membership with one another what if people found that to be the case that to be true of our community that it wasn't a place of judgment like so many people think Christianity is but it was a place of restoration a place of spiritual healing a place of spiritual help what if they found people who loved each other enough to take the logs out of their own eyes and be the humble soul surgeons that Jesus calls us to be that's what I need and I'm not just using the rhetorical I here in my sermon that's what I personally

Nick need I need someone who isn't going to condemn me with a spirit of judgment but someone who's actually going to correct me and be helpful I can't see the specks in my own eye you can't see the specks in your eye I can't see them in my eye but you know what you can see them in my eye and you can help so this is point number one as Jesus starts framing relationships for us Jesus is telling us that when it comes to your brothers and sisters in the kingdom you're not there to pronounce judgment you're there to offer humble help second point is this be discerning this is verse six look there again with me do not give dogs what is holy do not throw your pearls before pigs lest they trample them underfoot and turn and attack you okay now this verse is striking on a lot of levels right striking level number one it's pretty clear that Jesus is calling some people dogs and pigs okay that probably challenges some of our views of who Jesus is right oh Jesus meek and mild he would never hurt an ant and then he calls people dogs and pigs does that mean Jesus doesn't love people no but I think we need to come to terms with who Jesus really is and this becomes even more shocking when you consider that in the first century dogs weren't exactly sort of cuddly pets no one had a gold retriever in the first century that was neat and you played fetch with it and you took it to the lake and it swam for you right no dogs were these mangy creatures that ran around in packs in your city and carried diseases nobody liked dogs so it's pretty bad I think about pigs I have a son I have a three year old son at home you know I think one of the things you get as a three year old son is like a farm set up with little plastic pigs and they're cute right they roll around in the mud they're really neat look a pig for a first century Jew was like the definition of something that was ritually unclean no Jew would have looked at a pig and be like oh cute look it's rolling around in the mud no it was unclean it was bad okay you get the point what the heck is Jesus talking about here what is he saying about our relationships here I think is what Jesus is doing in this verse he is taking an extreme case and making a general point so he's making he's making an extreme sort of case he's taking an extreme case and making a general point here's the extreme case that Jesus is laying out for us he is saying that there will be some people that you will share the gospel with that's the pearl in Jesus' little parable right here the precious beautiful costly message of Christ there will be some people who will doggedly refuse and reject and renounce and ridicule all your repeated attempts to love them and to share the saving message of Christ with them and Jesus says for those who are that dogged in their opposition to me then there comes a time when you sadly need to invest your energies elsewhere not that you hate them not that you scorn them but you invest your energies elsewhere of course

God can change their heart overnight right Jesus goes right in to start talking about prayer after this verse I think that's telling and if God does that by all means give them the pearl right but there comes a time with some people when sadly you need to move on and invest your energies elsewhere now as I said Jesus is talking about an extreme case this isn't something we're going to run into every day in John Stott's commentary on this passage John Stott he said that in his entire ministry he only knew one or two people that he thinks would fall into this category one or two in his whole ministry now look John Stott was a pastor of a church in London one of the biggest cities in

the world and his evangelistic efforts took him literally all around the world and if someone like that says I only know one or two people then I think that should give us a lot of pause before we just start writing off our neighbors right no we shouldn't be doing that okay but the extreme example is meant to teach us a general lesson a general truth and the general truth is this that we need to be discerning in our relationships in other words we need to not be afraid to do honest spiritual assessment not in order to judge others but in order actually to love them think about it right one of the worst things that a medical doctor can do is give a false diagnosis when my brother was in high school in his sophomore year there came a time in his sophomore year when he was just always tired always fatigued and was not feeling himself so we took him to the doctor right my mom took him to the doctor and here's what the doctor said you know you're probably just going through some growth pains drink some protein shakes get some rest and it'll pass well for some reason that didn't quite sit right with my mom with my parents so they took him to another doctor and got a second opinion they ran some tests and found out which is a form of cancer had they listened to the first doctor who knows what would have happened but thankfully we caught it in time the treatments were successful my brother's been cancer free for over like 20 years but here's the point if it's that critical that we get an honest and accurate medical assessment how much more that we get an honest spiritual assessment

[22 : 37] I mean if the worst thing that a doctor can do is give you a false medical diagnosis the worst thing that a friend can do is give you a false spiritual diagnosis if done in humility an honest spiritual assessment is the most loving thing that we can receive if I'm dying spiritually and there's a cure I need to know of it one of my pastoral responsibilities here at Trinity is to give leadership and guidance to our youth ministry leaders who work with our middle schoolers and high schoolers our teenagers and you know too often what I find in youth ministry is that kids can get categorized as good kids you know this kid shows up to meetings he obeys the rules he's not too rebellious that kind of kid is supposedly a good kid but you know what that good kid apart from Christ is spiritually dead none of his rule following none of his attendance at our awesome

Wednesday night youth group meetings none of his outwardly commendable behavior means that he's in a saving relationship with Jesus and if all he hears is that he's a good kid then he's in a very spiritually dangerous place he's been given a misdiagnosis and he will remain sick and be headed for death friends think about your co-workers think about your neighbors is there someone who actually loves them enough to give them when the time is right an honest spiritual diagnosis now that doesn't mean we should go bang on our neighbor's door uninvited and call them a sinner right that's probably not the most helpful way to go about this yeah but in your life with those outside the church are you willing am I willing when the spirit opens the door to say that good works won't earn God's favor and that spiritually speaking we can never be good enough and that apart from Christ and what he's done for us in love we're spiritually dead how about you tonight friend has anyone been that honest with you are you willing to be that honest with yourself the only thing that will take away your spiritual cancer of sin and give you a clean record with God is a saving relationship with Christ how do you get there to get there you've got to agree with God's diagnosis of your spiritual condition you have to admit that you're a rebel against God and that that sin leads to death deserved death and then you need to turn away from trying to be the king of your own life and give your life to

Christ to trust in him alone for your record before God and if you haven't done that then there is no amount of rule following or church attendance that will ever make a difference but if you have done that or if you do that even tonight even right now then Christ will accept you and make you his own and finally for the first time you'll know what it's like to be alive not just to be sitting here in a body but to know spiritual life the last point that Jesus makes about our relationships is found in verse 12 so whatever you wish that others would do to you do also to them for this is the law and the prophets don't judge be discerning and now third do to others what you'd have them do to you and isn't this what we've been talking about the whole time

I don't want a proud judge I want a humble helper right I don't want a false diagnosis I want an honest true diagnosis that's what I want someone to do for me and Jesus says exactly do it for others be the humble soul surgeon be the honest friend and don't just stop there let this principle the golden rule as we sometimes call it rule all of your relationships in every aspect that's the law and the prophets you know when you study the first century you find that other teachers in Jesus day said similar things but they often would word it in the negative like this don't do to others what

you wouldn't want done to you but you see how Jesus flips it around he makes it positive do to others what you would have him do to you and doesn't that make it much more radical much more comprehensive much more just mind blowingly applicable to our lives but you know if we focus for a moment where Jesus has put the focus in verses 1 through 6 don't judge be discerning if that's what he's calling us to do unto others as we would have others do to us then I think two things become quickly really clear first we absolutely need to pray that's exactly what Jesus points to in verses 7 through 11 look there it's as if

[28 : 15] Jesus is saying in context you cannot possibly do this on your own you need to bathe every single relationship that you have in tremendous amounts of prayer not sure how to be a gentle soul surgeon with your wife or with your husband or with your roommate or with your friend Jesus says ask seek knock the father is not going to give you a stone he's going to give you bread not sure how to be discerning with your friends at work ask Jesus says seek knock your father is not going to give you a serpent he's going to give you fish look you know how to give your kids good gifts how much more do you think the father in heaven is going to give good things to those who ask him you see God wants to be at the center of all of our human relationships he wants to be the one that we depend on as we're trying to make our friendships work and as we're trying to make our church life work and as we're trying to make our marriages work and our relationship with our co-workers work and our family life work he wants us to be utterly dependent on him as we move out in those relationships he wants us to ask and to seek and to knock so that at the end of the day we won't take credit for our good relationships

God will get credit but secondly as we pray we need the gospel after all the reason why we're so judgmental why is that it's because we're so self righteous and on the flip side why are we not discerning and honest isn't it because we're so afraid of what others will think of us if we actually tell them what we know to be true so on the one hand we're too self righteous and proud and on the other hand we're too afraid what on earth could crush both pride and fear at the exact same time friends only this the cross of Jesus Christ what does the cross mean what does it say on the one hand what the cross says is that I am sinful beyond degree that I am so sinful that Jesus Christ the eternal son of God had to die for me in order to restore my relationship with God so beneath the cross there's more pride how could there be self righteousness beneath the cross there's no more judges beneath the cross but what does the cross also say the cross also says friends that I am loved beyond compare that so great was his love for me that Christ was willing to pour out his life gladly to die for me and that means that beneath the cross there's no more fear there's no more being afraid and worrying what others will think because now you see what God thinks your creator that you are loved with an eternal costly love so what do we need in our relationships friends we need a cross we need the gospel we need the cross and that's exactly what Jesus has done for us so in his kingdom there's no more pride and there's no more fear and in our relationships there's finally the power to do unto others what we have them do to us not to judge us but to help us not to give us false diagnoses but to give us true ones and friends these are the good things that the father has promised to give us through Christ by his spirit so let's pray father indeed tonight we confess that our relationships are hard god as we think about being spiritually helpful to one another and lord as we think about being spiritually helpful in giving true diagnoses to one another god we confess that we are out of our depth god we're too proud and we're too afraid so we need your holy spirit god father we need your spirit to remind us and to make the cross real to us so that it will drive out our pride and our fear so that we can be the kind of people who love the way Jesus calls us to love god i pray that that would be true of all the churches in new haven lord that those who take up your name would be known as those not who are judgmental but those who are actually spiritually helpful that we love one another even to the point of helping one another to grow and pointing out one another's faults humbly and lovingly god would this be true of us god help us beneath the cross to take the lens of this golden rule and shine it on all of our lives god that this would be the thing that drives us not because we're trying to earn your favor but because we have your favor and out of love and response to you we go forth to do this father we pray this in the name of Jesus amen