

Matthew 7:1-6

INTRODUCTION:

- Welcome to visitors...
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This morning, I would like for us to evaluate one of the most widely misused passages of the Bible...

- A few years ago, a congregation of the Lord's church in Oklahoma disfellowshipped a woman for immorality.
- When she filed a lawsuit against the church, the story was covered by all the national news media.
- One of the shows that covered the story was Phil Donahue and on that show, I think the attitude of Donahue and most of the audience could be summed up in the words: "***Do not judge lest you be judged.***"

It bothers me to hear someone use **Matthew 7:1** that way. But, you see, for them it's nice to have a verse that allows them to justify their actions when others try to hold them to Biblical standards, and I think that's how this verse has been most commonly used.

- It has been used to convey the idea that "**You live your lifestyle and I'll live mine. But don't you tell me how to live, and certainly don't try to impose your standards of morality on me.**"
- There are a lot of people try to make you believe that when Jesus said "***Do not judge lest you be judged***" that He was saying that we should never make a judgment towards another's actions.
- This morning, I would like for us to take an objective look at this passage in **Matthew 7** and identify what was the real message that the Lord Jesus Christ was expressing to His audience. Please turn to **Matthew 7**.

Before we read the passage, we need to remember the religious situation during this time.

- Jesus saw that judging others had become a great problem among those who were in prominent religious positions. The Pharisees and Scribes were very critical of others.
- They were quick to pass judgment on anyone who did not live up to their very strict expectations.
- In **Luke 7**, Jesus was in the house of Simon the Pharisee. When a sinful woman approached and washed Jesus' feet with her hair...Do you remember what Simon said?
- Simon made a very judgmental statement and said, "***If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.***"
- The Pharisees were so self-righteous and arrogant that they had created a special class of people called "***sinners,***" They acted as if they themselves were without sin.
- When we think of the very word "**hypocrite**" in the Bible, we always think of the Pharisees who were passing unfair judgment on others without first considering themselves.

Let us, therefore, consider the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we read **Matthew 7:1-6**

1 "Do not judge so that you will not be judged.

2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

3 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?

5 "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.

6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

I would like for us to make several observations regarding this piece of text.

- I. First of all, we find in **verses 1 & 2** that Jesus was saying that we need to use discernment when judging someone else's actions.

What Jesus was trying to address was the hyper-critical attitudes of people who were neglecting to show love and mercy.

- I am reminded of **John 8** when the Scribes and Pharisees were anxious to stone a woman who was caught in adultery. She was clearly guilty, and according to the law, she could be killed for her transgression.
- However, Jesus did not criticize her for her sins. Instead, He discouraged justice from being the course of action and He encouraged an act of mercy.
- And when the mob had dispersed, He said, **“Go. From now on sin no more.”**
- You see, it wasn’t a matter of whether or not she was to be judged. It was a matter of how she was to be judged!
- Jesus brought their harsh judgment to a quick and abrupt end by showing merciful judgment.
- In both passages, Jesus is expressing that we are supposed to judge with love and mercy.

There are two measures of judgment. We can measure others with justice or we can measure with mercy.

- When we begin to judge someone else, we need to ask ourselves which measure are we going to use?
- Some people use only justice when judging others, however they always want (of course) to be judged with the measure of mercy.
- **Verse 2** says, **“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”**
- What this means is that we need to judge others in the way that we would want to be judged.
- Wait a minute! That sounds rather familiar! It sounds an awful lot like the Golden rule!
- By the way, the golden rule is only a few verses down as Jesus continued His theme by saying in **verse 12**, **“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you.”**
- The message that Jesus was saying in **verse 1 & 2** was **“Do not judge, unless you are prepared to be judged by the same standards!”**

The standards by which we are to judge one another is by a standard of love and mercy.

- If we take a look at Luke’s account of Jesus words, we see that immediately before all of these things were said, Jesus was addressing love and mercy.
- **Luke 6:35-37** says, **“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.”**
- Matthew and Luke must have been referring to the same advice that Jesus had given, because Luke’s account also continues on to talk about the speck and the log in the eye.
- The Scribes and the Pharisees were judging one another with a **“holier than thou”** type of attitude.
- They were jumping to conclusions without knowing all of the facts.

There is a story about a newspaper reporter who was searching for a story about the laziness that existed among local farmers. One day, he saw a man in his field, sitting in a chair and hoeing his weeds.

- This had to be the ultimate in laziness. So he rushed back to his car to start his story when he looked back a second time and what he saw changed his entire outlook.
- He saw that the pants legs on the farmer hung down loose -- the man had no legs and was sitting in a special chair that allowed him to navigate through his field.
- What seemed at first to be a story of laziness turned into a story of great strength.

When Jesus said, **“Do not judge lest you be judged”** He was trying to encourage the people to show love and mercy rather than always trying to inflict justice on others.

- The Pharisees held others to incredibly high standards and came down hard on them when they did not live up to those standards.
- In this passage, Jesus was not trying to say that they shouldn’t judge, he was warning them about the way that they were judging.

- We know this in part, because in **John 7:24**, Jesus said, *“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”*
- And in **1 Samuel 16:7**, God made the point that *“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”*
- What all of this means to me is that I don’t have the right to sit in judgment on someone else’s motives, because I don’t know what they are thinking. Only the Lord knows.

Does all of this mean that we should just avoid making judgments on others?

- If a brother or sister in Christ is clearly guilty of some sort of sin are we to say to ourselves, *“judge not lest you be judged”* and then stay out of their business? Of course not!
- If we truly love them, we will do what we can to encourage them to make things right.
- The Apostle Paul in **Galatians 6:1** said, *“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”*
- OK. We are to *“restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...”* but what was that second part? *“...each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”*
- Paul continued on a couple verses later to say, *“But each one must examine his own work...”*

II. This brings us to a second observation that we can find from our text in verses 3 & 4 of Matthew 7. Jesus was saying that we need to evaluate our own lives, before we correct others.

Jesus said, *“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not noticed the log that is in your own eye?”*

- Some of the translations from the Greek language use the word *“plank”* in place of *“log”*.
- As we know, Jesus was a carpenter by trade. He and His audience would have been very familiar with the feeling of having a tiny speck of sawdust in the eye.
- But, I think His sense of humor shines brightly here and I think that those listening to Him must have had a good laugh thinking about a 2 X 4 sticking out of a guy’s eye and trying to help another with a tiny speck.
- The one with the speck having to duck under the 2 X 4 every time the other one turned his head.
- Jesus paints a picture of how ridiculous it is for someone with obvious and blatant problems of his own to be trying to fix someone else’s tiny little problem.
- James, the brother of Jesus said in **James 5:9**, *“Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.”*

Jesus said in **verse 5**, *“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.”*

- Apparently the Corinthians had a similar problem of forgetting to evaluate themselves.
- In **1 Corinthians 11:31**, Paul spoke to them about the Lord’s Supper and he said, *“But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.”*
- Again in **2 Corinthians 13:5** he said to them, *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!”*
- As we know, Paul very frequently would correct the early Christians and he would point them in the direction that they should go.
- He was very big about exhorting and even *“chewing them out”* for not being stronger and for giving in to sin. But you know what? Before Paul did these things, he had already examined himself!
- Paul had a good conscience about his actions...He had obviously taken the time to evaluate his own life...
- When he was before the Council of the Sanhedrin in **Acts 23:1** he said, *“Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.”*
- And in **Acts 24:16** he said, *“I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.”*

Like Jesus though, Paul also points out the dangers of judging one another since we do not know their motives and says that in comparison to our own judgment, God’s judgment is far superior.

- He says in **1 Corinthians 4:3-5**, “*But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.*”
- If we think about the speck in the eye, we recognize that we have to be up close and really invading the “personal space” of someone in order to notice their problem.
- We must very closely examine the person in order to even see a tiny speck in their eye.
- Jesus was clearly saying, don’t put someone else under the microscope, until you have put yourself under it first.
- Some times when we are being hyper-critical, we are also being hypocritical.

So many times it seems that my dirt is never as dirty as your dirt from my perspective. And your dirt is never as dirty as my dirt from your perspective.

- My sin never seems as sinful as the sin of others, but this is why it is so important for us to examine our own lives.
- How are we expected to help others with their problems when we have bigger problems of our own.

It is our responsibility to help others with their problems!

- If a child comes to you with a splinter in his finger and he’s crying, “**Please take this splinter out!**”
- What’s the Christian thing to do? Leave the splinter there? No! You take the splinter out.
- We can see that Jesus was saying that we should use discernment in helping others with their problems.
- If you see brothers or sisters who have specks in their eyes, you need to help them take it out!
- Jesus said, “*first take the log out...then you will see clearly to take the speck out...*”
- We are clearly expected to remove the speck!

III. There is a third observation that we can make from verse 6. We need to be very careful how we correct one another and need to choose our battles carefully.

Jesus says, “*Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*”

- When Jesus speaks of giving what is “*holy to dogs*” He makes reference to the sacrifices that had to first be sanctified before they could be offered up to God.
- A dog was considered an unclean animal and the holy remnants from the sacrifices were either to be eaten by the priests or they were to be destroyed.
- As a Christian, you have been sanctified and it seems that what Jesus was trying to say, was “**Don’t waste valuable time and effort on those who constantly reject your advice.**”
- Don’t waste your time throwing yourself in front of ravenous dogs that “*turn and tear you to pieces.*”
- It is impossible to remove someone else’s speck, if they are not willing to allow us to help!
- We have a gospel message that is far more valuable than the finest pearls, but we are instructed not to throw our “*pearls before swine*” when we can see that they will only be rejected.
- We are to correct one another with discretion...choosing our battles wisely...

Mike Cope, the former preacher of the College Church of Christ at Harding University used to live by the ocean.

- Every once in a while, he’d go fishing and catch some grouper, which, at that time, sold for about \$5.00 a pound in the market.
- On one occasion, he served some of that grouper to some friends who came over.
- They tasted it and said, “**Ooh! This is really good! It tastes like chicken!**”
- Well, to him, that was the ultimate insult. Chicken is a simple bird that sold for 79 cents a pound, and he was telling Mike that that’s what his hard-won grouper tasted like.
- In a sense, he had shared pearls with swine.
- The next time they came over, guess what Mike served them? Chicken!

Some times people will not appreciate the “good news” that we have to share with them and some times they will reject the message.

- Jesus instructed His disciples in **Matthew 10:14** by saying, “*Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.*”
- The Apostle Paul took Jesus’ advice and in **Acts 18:6** the Jews resisted his message about Jesus and he “*shook out his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’*”
- We have got to use the same type of discernment and not waste our spiritual treasures on people who will just trample them under their feet.

SUMMARY:

This morning, we have learned that we need to exercise very careful discernment before judging someone.

- We need to be careful about being critical about one another and neglecting to show love and mercy.
- We should never judge someone’s motives, for only God knows the state of their heart.
- We have also learned that we need to first evaluate our own lives.
- How silly we look when we have a blatant problem of our own as we are looking at others with a critical eye. Our own problems inhibit us from effectively helping others with their problems.
- Finally, we have learned that we need to choose our battles carefully. We cannot correct someone else’s sins if they are not willing to be corrected.
- Our approach must be out of love and it must be gentle.

CONCLUSION:

So often today, people will look at Christians and they call us hypocrites because they see the sins in our lives.

- They hold us to some impossible standards and expect us to be perfect and they use this as an excuse not to come to church. “**Why go to church, they’re all hypocrites anyway!**”
- ...They either do not understand what the word hypocrite means, or they do not understand what it means to be a Christian.
- A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be something that they are not.
- A Christian is someone who acknowledges that they sin, yet strives for perfection.
- We don’t claim to be perfect, but that certainly doesn’t stop us from trying to be better!

I found a poem that does a good job of summarizing these thoughts...

The church is not made up of people who think they are better than the rest, but people who know they ought to be better than they are.

The church is not made up of people who think they are perfect, but of people who are sure they have found the perfect ideal in Jesus of Nazareth.

The church is not made of people who think they never make mistakes, but of people who have a consciousness of wrongdoing.

The church is not trying to tell people what they have to believe, but is trying to tell what they can believe, and what a difference it will make in their live if they will believe these things.

The church is not trying to take the joy out of life, but it is trying to put joy in every man’s life that will last through all eternity.

–Author Unknown–

INVITATION:

Because of Christ's blood sacrifice on our behalf **Hebrews 10:14** refers to Jesus and says, "*For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.*"

- In His eyes, we can be made perfect "*for all time.*"
- We cannot live a sinless life "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*" however, we can be cleansed of our sins and sanctified in God's presence.

This can only be done by acknowledging that we are sinful and to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God who gave Himself as a ransom for many.

- He paid the ransom to cover our sins and He asked us in return to live our lives in obedience to Him.
- Jesus said in His own words in **Luke 13:3**, "*but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*"
- He also said in **Matthew 10:32**, "*Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.*"
- Once again in **Mark 16:16**, in His own words Jesus said, "*He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.*"

If there is anyone here this morning, who has not taken these steps in your life, we hope that you will respond to the words of our Lord in doing what, deep down, you know you need to do.

- Don't reject His teachings any longer.
- As Jesus also said in **John 14:15**, "*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*"
- Don't delay, respond to His commandments today!
- If you would like to respond, please come forward as we stand and sing.