

Sermon on the Mount Part XXXVI - Judge Not #2

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[0 : 00] Concluding chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, and if you would return to that once again, we will resume our consideration of the subject of judging.

We are in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 7, and we would like to read again, if we may, those first five verses, if you will follow along in whatever translation you have.

Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 7, we are talking about judging and judgmentalism. And the text says, Do not judge, lest you be judged.

For in the way you judge, you will be judged, and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. By the way, let me just stop and inject something here.

I don't think that this is talking about an eternal judgment or the final assize whereby people stand before God and give an account.

[0 : 59] I don't think that judgment here is in reference to that. I think what this is in reference to is a community-type thing. And if I may put it this way, I think Christ is saying that those who enter into judgment in your circle, in your sphere, in your area, those who are judgmental will be judged that way by others.

So he is not talking, I don't believe, about some future judgment, because this could be a very negative kind of thing, and that just doesn't fit the grand assize.

So, in the way you judge, you will be judged, and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. And 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?

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? 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.

So, this subject is one that is grossly misrepresented today, because many times people simply want to use this to cover up some kind of unseemly activity.

[2 : 27] And lest anybody be critical of them for what they see, their response may well be this. Well, now, you shouldn't judge. You know, the Bible says that you are not to judge.

Well, you cannot live a normal life without judging. Judging simply means arriving at conclusions. Synonyms for judging are discernment, assessment, evaluation, all of which enter into our lives on a daily basis.

You cannot live a normal life without exercising discernment and judgment. So, it is apparent that our Lord is not saying that, because over in John's Gospel, we won't go there, but John 7, I think it's 17, or no, it's 24, Jesus said, judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

So, Christ is not saying don't judge. But what he is saying is don't judge according to appearance.

Those who are judgmental in their attitude and in their demeanor are people who reach conclusions without sufficient facts.

And you know we're all guilty of that. Do you know that so-and-so and so-and-so got married last week? No. Really? Well, she married him for his money.

[4 : 00] Well, you know, maybe she did. But did she tell you that? Do you know that for a fact? Well, I can put two and two together. Well, you see, somebody who is judgmental doesn't need many facts.

They provide their own facts. They are confident they have the ability to connect the dots and reach the right conclusions. The problem is they're very often wrong.

And they reach a conclusion without sufficient information. And that is embarrassing to everybody. And what happens is an injustice takes place.

We spend so much time doing this. If you've been following any of the things on television and the issues that are taking place now on the national scene, and I'm thinking primarily of the two that seem to be at the forefront, and that is the IRS issue and the targeting of conservative groups and withholding a tax exemption and neutralizing them financially.

And the fact is what it did. And then the other, of course, is the Benghazi thing where four Americans were killed. And there are still so very many answers that are yet forthcoming.

[5 : 23] A lot of questions we don't have answers to. And Jim is working with this on a regular basis. And what they're trying to do is not rush to judgment and form conclusions without sufficient information.

Our courts go through this all the time. And the whole idea of a jury is for the jury to hear evidence from witnesses so that the jury can make a right decision, can exercise good judgment, whether it's guilty or not guilty.

They need facts. They need information to go on. And if there is anything that a judge and jury should not be guilty of, it's rushing to judgment. If you ever want to get excused from jury duty and they're interviewing you, just all you have to do is say, I know that sucker is guilty.

I can just see it on his face. Well, you've just excused yourself from jury duty. That's called a rush to judgment. And you don't know that. But you form a conclusion without sufficient information.

So our congressional committees are charged with the responsibility of calling in witnesses or in some cases subpoenaing witnesses because they don't always voluntarily come.

[6 : 48] And then they try to extract from them the information that is needed to determine exactly what happened and why it happened and who was responsible so that a right conclusion, a right judgment can be effected.

So that's judging. And we go through it all the time. And we told you in our introductory session last time that the only way and the only basis that we have for judging anything is the preexistence of a norm or standard.

You cannot judge the rightness or wrongness of an act unless there is already in place an accepted norm by which to evaluate other actions.

There has to be a moral north star that determines right and wrong. That overarching blanket that we believe that exists, which allows for these things to be absolute rather than relative.

And if you do not have an overarching blanket of morality, which we believe comes from God, then everything is up for grabs. Everything is relative.

[8 : 03] Nothing is nailed down. Everything is to one's opinion. And this is why, as we pointed out when we talked about the Constitution last week, and if you didn't get part one to this, you may want to stop back at the table and pick up last week's message.

But the Constitution is our document, our guiding document that sets forth the expectations, the parameters, the limitations, the responsibilities of our Congress, of the government.

And by having this document written, and I think we pointed out to you the importance of these things being written down, they can't be verbally handed down from one person to the next.

Oral tradition doesn't cut it. These things being written down, you have something to which you can continually refer and look back to, and you've got the standard. You've got the North Star there in the Constitution.

And even that is no guarantee that right conclusions will always be reached because there are variable interpretations as to what the Constitution means by what it says in certain places.

[9 : 19] So man in government has certainly got his work cut out for him, to be sure. So here we are talking about the importance of judging and the importance of gaining the information that's necessary in order to reach a sound judgment.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, we've got an expression that is used by the Apostle Paul, and if you'll turn to that please. It is a perfect illustration of the importance for judging and the need to.

1 Corinthians chapter 6, Paul is presenting a case, obviously, that was brought to his attention by the people at Corinth, and it caused quite a stir.

1 Corinthians chapter 6, Paul says, 1 Corinthians chapter 6, Paul says, So he is dealing with an issue here that has probably financial considerations involved.

You know, that almost always, it's either money or territory or something like that. And these believers can't get along and they can't agree about this issue, and they decide to take the matter to court, to the civil court.

[11 : 39] And Paul says, And Paul says, you have no business doing that. Christians ought not to air their dirty laundry before unbelievers.

You are supposed to settle these differences within the Christian community. Don't you have any men of any stature or any ability who can sit down and hear the grievances of these individuals and reach a good, valid conclusion?

Shame on you. You have no business asking the court of unbelievers to settle these issues among you. You're supposed to settle them among yourselves. And not only that, but if it's going to cost you money to keep it out of court, for the sake of Christ and the testimony of the Christian community, why don't you just eat it?

Why don't you just absorb the loss yourself? Now, that's a real sacrifice. But very often we're not prone to do that. So we want our pound of flesh, and sometimes we'll go to Caesar's court to get it, and that ought not so to be.

I'm not saying that there are no occasions wherein a Christian should ever be in a civil court. I'm sure there are some that require that, that even demand that. But the differences that most people have among themselves should be settled among themselves in an amiable matter.

[12 : 58] And it should be done in such a way that the litigants can still remain friends even after a verdict is reached. So, these are important issues. When we judge prematurely without the facts, that's what our Lord is talking about, and that's what he is condemning.

We are not to rush to judgment, jump to conclusions. And you see this all the time. And you know what? People love this stuff. Do you realize that this is the fodder of all of the, what do you call them, the magazines that you pick up?

If you don't have anything better to do with your money, that you pick up at the supermarket. You see them right there at the checkout thing, where the impulse item, you reach over and buy it. You know, and here's Lady Gaga is dating a Martian.

And it goes on and on. And people are titillated by this stuff. And they buy these things. I know they do. Because they tell us that they sell millions of them every week.

And you know what all of this stuff leads to? It leads to nothing but gossip. It feeds the gossip mills. And some people just thrive on this stuff.

[14 : 18] Conspiracy theories. Who killed Kennedy? How many conspiracy theories? What these people are doing is they are connecting dots.

Some of which don't even exist. But that doesn't keep them from connecting them. They don't need them to exist. They fill in all the blanks themselves. And really, it's a form of arrogance.

What our Lord is saying is, look, don't rush to judgment. Don't make hasty conclusions about anything. Be willing to give some people a benefit of the doubt.

One of the most moving things that I ever heard that really spoke to me. And I thought, wow. That's true. Chuck Swindoll was telling about this.

He was holding a Bible conference someplace in California. And started out on the Monday morning. And he noticed there was a fellow right down in front there. And the place was pretty well filled.

[15 : 19] And this gentleman was sitting there. And he acted like he was really into the message. But about halfway through his message, he said he noticed this guy was dotting off.

You know. And he thought, well, it's not a problem. He probably drove a long way to get here. And he's probably tired and probably didn't get a good night. That's the second morning.

He's the same fellow sitting there with his wife. And he's nodding off again about halfway through his message. And he thought, well, he thought to himself, well, I'll give him a break on the first time. But this is the second morning. And besides, what I'm bringing right now is pretty good. Third morning, same thing. All through the week. And after the week was over, why Chuck said he was standing at the back greeting people as they came out.

And everyone was expressing their appreciation for the messages and so on. And this fellow and his wife came back. And he was over there at the book table looking over some of the books. And his wife walked up to Chuck Swindoll and says, you never know how much this week meant to us.

[16 : 21] He said, my husband over there said the one thing he wanted to do before he went to be the Lord was to hear Chuck Swindoll in person.

And his doctor told him that he probably shouldn't come, that he's only got a few weeks to live. And he said that he just wanted to include that in his life.

He wanted to hear Chuck Swindoll. And my husband has terminal cancer. And he's on a very heavy dose of medication. And it just puts him out. I'm amazed that he could even get here in the morning. But he just can't. The medication is so strong for the pain. And Chuck said, as she was talking, I felt myself getting smaller and smaller and smaller.

Because about Wednesday, I was getting kind of offended that this man would doze off while I'm speaking. So, that's being judgmental.

[17 : 26] That is assigning what? Laziness, indifference, whatever, to someone who had a perfectly logical reason for dozing off. And I thought, you know, I've put a number of people to sleep in my preaching career.

And I never even thought about that. I just always thought, well, they obviously didn't get enough sleep last night. Or they were up watching late night TV. Or maybe my message deserves to be dozed off on.

You know, that's always a possibility too. But it's so easy to be judgmental and reach conclusions that are far wide of the mark.

We just don't know what other people have on their plate. What they're dealing with. What they're struggling with.

And we can be so quick to assign something to them like irresponsibility or stupidity or impatient or whatever. And very often, we just don't know what we're talking about.

[18 : 32] But that doesn't make us withhold judgment. And it should. It should. Just pull back. Give people the benefit of the doubt.

Because we don't know what's going on in their mind. What they're struggling with. We don't know who they talked to 15 minutes ago and what they told them. We just assume.

You see, we assume. That's rushing to judgment. And we ought not to do that. Water cooler gossip. That is so prevalent in workplaces.

Another issue, similar issue. And when you hear these things, I want you to just keep in mind that these stories are legion. They're out there everywhere.

And yet, hearing these things still makes us sometimes quick to judge and assign motives to people about things.

[19 : 38] Remember this? Hearing about this lady that worked with an office team of about four or five other ladies. And their business was such a nature that every Friday, they had to get everything cleared out, get the book straight, get the order straight and everything.

It all had to be shaped up on Friday of each week. That was their crisis time. And from about noon on for those last five hours, they just worked like troopers to get all that done.

And everybody had a part to do. And this one particular Friday, one of these gals called in sick. Said, I just can't make it this morning.

I just, I feel badly. Okay. Well, she was excused. So the rest of them just assumed that she had some legitimate reason for calling in sick. And that they would take up the slack and they would cover for it.

And, you know, the next Friday, she called in sick again. Well, that's strange. Both Fridays. Both kind of crisis days.

[20 : 44] But they didn't think too much about it. You know, it could just be the third Friday. Now, this is getting to be a little much. I mean, this lady is just bugging out on them when they've got all of the heat of this work to get done and everything.

And what's going on here anyway? And that started the conversations around the water cooler. And they were posing different suggestions and different answers.

And they were becoming quite testy about this one whom they thought was just bugging out on them. And sure enough, Fourth Friday, calls in sick again. This is too much.

They're not going to take this. So they go to the boss and complain. What is this? Why should she be getting these three-day weekends? It just makes more work for us. And blah, blah, blah. And they were all in agreement on that.

And the boss, well, she called in sick. I just took her to word that she was sick. What was I supposed to do? I saw her she had to come in anyway. And started becoming a real rhubarb around the office.

[21 : 45] And you can imagine the chatter that was going on. Especially at the water cooler. So when she came to work Monday, the boss called her in.

And said, I need to talk to you about your work record lately. You're not showing up on Fridays. He said, we can understand a Friday or two.

But now this is going on. This is four Fridays. People are starting to talk. They're resenting this. You're not pulling your fair share of the load. And what's going on here? And she broke down and started crying.

And, well, that makes it all the more difficult for the boss. And she said, well, I've been dealing with some things. Well, what is it?

What's the problem? What's going on anyway? And she said, I've been receiving chemotherapy treatments on Mondays and Wednesdays.

[22 : 45] And this has to go on. It's gone on for several weeks. And it has to go on for X number of weeks. Well, why didn't you say anything? Why didn't you tell us? Well, I just didn't want everybody treating me differently.

And I didn't want everybody pitying me. So I just tried to keep it to myself. And I guess it didn't work out very well.

And the problem is, Monday after my treatment, I'm okay. And Tuesday, I'm okay.

Wednesday, I start feeling pretty bad. But Wednesday is when I have to have another treatment.

And I can just barely get through Thursday. But by Thursday evening or Friday morning, I'm just absolutely wiped out.

I can't hardly function. And I just go to bed for the whole weekend and then come in on Monday.

And the boss says, well, can, will you give me permission to relate this to the other girls?

[23 : 53] And she said, well, I guess you need to. So he got them all together and told them what was going on. And, of course, they started crying.

Then they were feeling sorry for her. But they were also feeling really bad because of their attitude. Maybe she should have told them.

But she had her reasons for not. But, you know, there is a case where they just connected the dots that they thought were the dots. And they were non-existent dots.

They had it all wrong. And the truth of the matter was, they would have all felt entirely differently about that if they had known the truth. But it didn't keep them from rushing to judgment because they just assumed that, oh, she just wants a three-day weekend.

Wouldn't it be nice if we all had three-day weekends? Now, what I'm saying is there are all kinds of situations out there like that, similar to that, same principle and everything, that causes all of us to sit in judgment on someone about something that's going on.

[25 : 02] And you know what? Your judgment and your assessment may be right. It may be right. But you don't know that. You don't know that because you don't know.

All that's going on. That's what our Lord is saying here. Don't have a judgmental attitude. Get the facts.

Get the information. And if you're not entitled to the information, then just back off and don't have an opinion. You don't have to have an opinion about everything. Sometimes the most noble three words that you can utter to yourself are, I don't know.

I don't know. I don't know. So just leave it there. You don't have to have an answer. You don't have to have an opinion. You don't have to make a decision.

Just leave it with a question mark. God has a perspective that is absolutely flawless and full.

[26 : 09] Our perspective is flawed and lacking about everything. Revelation 19. 19.2 says of God, true and righteous are his judgments.

God is the only one who is always able to connect all the dots and reach the precise, just conclusion.

We are not. That's the moral of this passage. Let's not be critical, judgmental, one of another. Just maybe we look at somebody and something that's going on in their life or something that they're doing and we say this doesn't seem right, doesn't pass the smell test, doesn't look good, etc.

And maybe it's a legitimate case where we ought to go to a brother and sister and actually talk to them about what seems to be. And you might be doing them a favor. But so far as reaching a conclusion and assessing an answer where we really don't know, we don't have one.

Let's just give them the benefit of the doubt. As we say, cut each other some slack and back off because we just don't know.

[27 : 32] Question or comment? Anyone? Okay. Bill McDowell in the back there.

I'm sorry. I didn't warn you about the mic. We'll still cut this short. We'll just take a couple of quick questions or comments. Revelation 19 what?

Revelation 19. I think it's 19.2. True and righteous are his judgments. And that's not just in that context, of course, but it's any time the Lord exercises judgment.

Okay. Anything else? Joe, up here in front. Wait a second, Joe. Here comes the mic. The verses that refer to the speck in the eye and the log in the eye, is that basically mean that, you know, sin is sin regardless.

You've got sin in your life, so why be pointing out the sins in the other guy's life type of thing? Is that what it is? That's exactly what it is saying. Sometimes the person who is most critical, he can be very critical of a minor thing in someone else's life, while in his own life, he's entertaining a whopper. [29 : 03] That's the log, as opposed to the moat or the splinter. And it's a contrasting thing. It's another way of saying the person who tends to be most judgmental about others really has a bigger problem in his own life, and he doesn't even know it.

That's the essence of it, I think. Anything else? In the back, Roger. Dave is getting a workout this morning.

I keep thinking we ought to get these guys rollerblades or something. Yeah, as a recovering hothead, probably one of the toughest things I had to learn was to, if you cannot remedy the situation using logic and just talking to somebody or studying about it, just before you go to sleep at night, when you lay your head down, you just give it to the Lord.

And he'll be the perfect righteous judge. And I worry sometimes that maybe I go too far and not concerned about things that we should be.

You know, our government is, we still need to be involved somewhat in those, but not enough that it takes away from our spiritual life. You know, we're in the world, but not of the world.

[30 : 28] And I really fight that a lot because I read so much on the Internet. I hated getting on that the first time, but you get hooked to that booger once you go on. And, you know, there's just so much information that you can glean.

It's not all right. Oh, yeah. Nobody's perfect. Right. You know, but... Yeah. Well, this is called the information age, and it is well named. And there are lots of things on the Internet that are just absolutely wonderful and just almost priceless.

But there's a lot of nonsense out there, too. And, you know, you can put almost anything on the Internet. It doesn't have to have a grain of truth in it.

So you have to be very discerning when you get on there and read things that people say and claims that are made. And don't just assume that they've got it all right.

And it's... You wouldn't do that to the newspaper. You wouldn't say, I read it in the newspaper so I know it's true. It'd be even worse to say, I saw it on the Internet.

[31 : 33] That's how I know it's true. Oh, man. Wake up. It wasn't Mark Twain who used to say, if you do not read the newspaper, you are uninformed.

And if you do read the newspaper, you are misinformed. And it can be that way on the Internet, too. So you need to develop a discerning eye. And I'll tell you how. And with this, I'm going to leave you. The way you can develop a discerning eye for truth and error is to familiarize yourself more and more with that which is true.

Nothing will help you spot error more quickly than having a good dose of truth in your mind. That is so important. And when you have that truth, you've got the North Star by which to evaluate things. You've got the moral compass that allows you to assess and see things as they really are. John, did you have a comment? Just wanted to ask about when a group or anybody actually says, you can't judge, you know, you're not allowed to judge.

[32 : 42] What do you do with that? Well, as a Christian, you know, judge not unless you. You have a responsibility to judge. You have a responsibility to judge.

You do not have the right to be judgmental. And the difference is huge. We judge because we are required to judge.

You cannot live a life without judging. Judging means exercising discernment, making choices, discriminating, evaluating, assessing. All of those things have to go into reaching a conclusion.

So there's nothing wrong with judging. We are called upon to judge. But we are also called upon, as our Lord said, judge righteous judgment. Don't judge according to appearances, but judge righteous judgment.

And all that's saying is, all Christ is saying is, things do not always appear. Things that appear are not always as they seem.

[33 : 43] You know, it's sometimes, what am I saying? Things are not always as they seem. So you have to get under the surface sometimes in order to really, you know, if we judged according to appearances, we would probably make just one wrong judgment after another.

Because things often are not as they appear. And that's where investigation comes in. And that's why you have these committees. That's why you have juries and panels.

And it's all for the purpose of trying to get under the surface of the way things seem to get at the real scoop. What really happened. What really took place. And it's not easy to do.

And the reason it isn't easy to do is because people lie. That's why it isn't easy to do. People lie. If everybody just got up there and told the truth, it would be a piece of cake.

The jury could reach a verdict just like that. But what the jury has to do is try to decide who's lying and who's telling the truth. And that's what makes it tough. So that's all the more reason to withhold judgment because we just don't know.

[34 : 53] If you're put in a position of responsibility where you have to provide some kind of an answer. Or solution or whatever. Then you have to investigate it. And if that's your responsibility.

Then you have to seek out the information before you can make a value judgment. And it's not an easy thing. Joe, I'm trying to let you go. It's yourselves that's keeping me. Okay, Joe.

I'm trying to put the microphone. Put your hand in there. It's a good joke. We make a lot of judgmental things about things that are inconsequential.

Oh, yeah. The toilet paper goes over this way or goes over that way. You have arguments and fights about it. So what I saw in that scripture too, what you're saying is that if we're going to have a big judgment, it should be on righteous things.

Yeah, on moral issues. Moral issues that Christ said before that the Bible tells about. Yeah. If there's no principle like that, then don't be judgmental about those things.

[35 : 49] They don't need anything. Whether you should walk this fast or that slow or whatever. Absolutely. Absolutely. I appreciate that, Joe. And the toilet paper goes on the outside, by the way. Yeah.

Well, we, at our home, we have the fortunate advantage of having back-to-back bathrooms. And the toilet paper in Marie's bathroom goes on the inside, which, of course, is wrong.

And in my bathroom, it goes on the outside. I'm glad we had this little talk. Okay. Okay. Would you stand, please? And we'll be dismissed. Father, we're grateful for principles that you've set forth in your word and how that the word interprets the word.

And we've seen that happen again here this morning. Thank you for all that we possess in Christ. Thank you for the joy that we have in him. Thank you for the laughter, for the good times, for the memories, and for the ability to look at a situation where there is a moral North Star, a moral norm and standard in place because you've given it.

And we can assess all of life in accordance with that. We bless you for every gracious and wonderful provision you've made for us. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

[37 : 13] Amen.