

Hymns: 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 11 How Great Thou Art
Scripture: Psalm 98:4-9

Big Idea: Judge Righteously

Tomorrow, President Trump will announce his choice to replace the retiring Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy. Who will he choose? Indeed, there's an uproar in the media over this appointment and how it will alter the so-called *balance* of the court. Today, we're going to look at the topic of judging, but before we do, let's set the stage.

You may recall, last time we looked at the two Golden Rules.

1. Thou shalt love God.
2. Thou shalt love thy neighbor.

We learned that they were a summary of the law and that no one in his or her own strength can keep them.

We saw that under the Dispensation of Law, people lacked the resources that we have in our present dispensation to live victorious lives. They were limited to confession and sacrifices. In our present dispensation:

firstly, we have the **motivation** to love the Lord because Jesus first **loved** us and demonstrated that love by **dying** to redeem us;

secondly, Jesus **demonstrated** His power over death by rising from the dead;

and finally, He **gave** the gift of His Holy Spirit to lead us and empower us.

When we follow Him, we have no need for any law (written on cold tables of stone) because He will never lead us astray as His ways are written on fleshy tables of our hearts (II Corinthians 3:3).

You may recall, this Golden Rule study started with my note back to a Girl Scout's mom regarding their new membership policy. She replied that she was a "follower of Jesus" who believed the Golden Rule meant to be "inclusive" and "not waste time judging others." Having addressed the Golden Rule, we will look at that issue of *judging* today.

To give you insight into the source of this nice lady's thinking, let me give you a bit more background. I looked up the her church and found it to be very special indeed. It holds a record in my experience. About twenty years ago, it was meeting in a theater. I decided to stop by and visit a service. As I walked in, I was greeted and offered coffee and perhaps some kind of pastry. I declined. I did notice that I was wearing a suit while everyone else – even those on stage – were dressed in casual attire.

I took a seat anyway. The blaring music stopped long enough to allow one man on-stage to give a short speech expounding the virtues of some "brother" or "sister." There were lots of smiles and hugs, and enthusiastic applause, but there was no mention of Jesus Christ in this Sunday morning service. At that

point, I stood up and left. So what was the record? It was the shortest time I ever spent attending a church service.

I checked the church's website and found that they believe the Bible to be a *collection of* inspired and other writings. Of course, we believe the Bible is the word of God – cover to cover. Their church is all about loving others and showing God's love. That's commendable, but without the solid truth of God's word, it's like a ship without a rudder and without an anchor. No wonder this well-meaning "follower of Jesus" is so confused about God's truth.

So let's get started. Here's the quote of Jesus on judging others that is frequently **so** misused to silence and criticize Christians.

Matthew 7

[1] *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

[2] *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: ...*

That sounds pretty definite. Does this really mean not **ever** to judge? And how shall we interpret that statement of conditional judgment? Who will judge us? Is it referring to God, to others, or both? We'll explore those questions and more in our study today.

The two-verse couplet feels like a proverb. According to John 16:25, 29 Jesus did teach using proverbs.

So let's try to understand this. We'll first check the context. What follows the proverb gives us a big clue.

[3] *And why beholdest thou the [speck] ... in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the **beam** ... in thine own eye?*

[4] *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull ... the [speck] out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

[5] *Thou **hypocrite**, first [remove] the beam [from] thine own eye; and **then** shalt thou see clearly to [remove] the [speck from] **thy brother's eye**.*

Jesus is instructing
how people are to judge others.

Notice that.

He's saying to help your brother with his speck, but take care of your beam first.

The one point and perhaps the **key** point **is** that we should **not** be **hypocrites** when we judge.

Notice also Jesus' use of hyperbole here. Obviously, you cannot have a **beam** in your eye. He was exaggerating to make it emphatic.

Let's move on.

[6] *Give **not** that which is holy unto the dogs,
neither cast ye your pearls before swine,
lest they trample them under their feet,*

and turn again and [tear] you [to pieces].

In order to follow **this** command we must determine who the *dogs* and *swine* are. That requires making a judgment.

[12] Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

There's that Golden Rule (part two) again. At least now we know what it means.

Notice that both the *judge not* proverb and the Golden Rule appear in the Sermon on the Mount given to Jesus' disciples (Matthew 5:1-2) and the crowd (7:28) that gathered around.

*[15] Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are **ravening wolves**.*

*[16] Ye shall **know them***

How?

by their fruits. ...

*[17] Even so every **good tree** bringeth forth **good fruit**; but **a corrupt tree** bringeth forth **evil fruit**.*

*[20] Wherefore by their **fruits** ye shall **know** them.*

Wait a minute!

Just a few verses back Jesus said not to judge.

Then He said don't judge hypocritically.

Now here He's saying to be a fruit inspector and **judge** accordingly.

So based on context, we see that Jesus is **not** prohibiting judgment of others. Instead, he's saying **not to be a hypocrite** when we **do** judge them.

Notice, this same Jesus said:

John 7

[24] Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Two sermons back, we looked at what I called conditional forgiveness and the Unpardonable Sin. The statement of conditional forgiveness appearing in the Lord's Prayer sounds very similar to this *judge not* proverb we're looking at today. But there is a difference. Can you see it?

Matthew 6:

*[14] For if ye forgive men their trespasses, **your heavenly Father** will also forgive you:*

[15] *But if ye forgive **not** men their trespasses, neither will **your Father** forgive your trespasses.*

These verses explicitly state that **God's** forgiveness was conditional. Despite that, we learned that **Jesus died for those sins** and even the so-called Unpardonable Sin. They are **not** forgiven. Jesus paid the penalty for them, and we who know the Lord are clothed in His righteousness.

But in the very next chapter when Jesus talks about judging, He changes. Here it is again:

Matthew 7

[1] *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

[2] *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: ...*

Notice there's no mention of **God's** judgment here. That's a big difference. One of our rules for understanding Jesus teaching is to treat His words with **great care**. He left this one open-ended. He makes no reference to God. What do we do? Does context give us any more clues? Let's look again at that verse 12.

[12] ***Therefore** all things whatsoever ye would **that men** should do to you, do ye even so **to them**: for this is the law and the prophets.*

There's our friend the Golden Rule (part two) again. It's **linked** to the verses that precede it with the word *therefore*. The Golden Rule (part two) applies to our relationship to **others** and how **they** respond to us. If we utilize the clues of context given in verse 12, we conclude that unlike in Matthew 6, this proverb, relating to judgment, is talking about our judgment of **others** that influences **their** judgment of us.

But wait. What about the parallel passage in Luke chapter 6. We had better take a look at that one too just to be sure. Could it be that **that** passage includes the idea that **God** will judge us based on how we judge others?

Luke 6

[37] *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged:
condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:
forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:*

[38] *Give, and it shall be given unto you;*

good measure,

pressed down,

and shaken together,

and running over,

shall men give into your bosom.

For with the same measure that [you use] it shall be measured [back] to you [].

Notice the *judge not* statement is part of a list that includes conditional forgiveness. We already have a reference where conditional forgiveness is explicitly stated as being done **by God**. Doesn't that lend weight to the idea that *ye shall not be judged* means being judged by God as well?

You're probably wondering how I will get out of this one. The problem is we want to be **certain** we understand whether the phrases: *be judged, be condemned, be forgiven, be given, and be measured* involve man's doing or God's doing.

Can context help us here? Let's look at the verse again:

*[38] Give, and it shall be given unto you;
good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall **men** give into your bosom. For with the same measure that [you use] it shall be measured [back] to you [].*

You likely have heard that verse, by the way, more than once misappropriated right before the offering plate is passed. I have. Did you notice the *giving* in verse 38 is done **by men** and not God? That *seems* to settle the matter. The Luke 6 passage agrees with what we found in Matthew 7. We're done. Right? No, not so fast!

Unfortunately, not **all** Bible translations agree with this wording. We just saw the King James Version uses *men*, Youngs, the ASV, and the NASB use the word *they* but most others make the wording elliptical.

For example, the NIV says:

will be poured into your lap

leaving the subject **unstated** rather than as in the NASB:

They will pour into your lap

So which is correct? After checking Greek translation aids, I was still not sure. That's when I enlisted a neighbor friend who studied biblical Greek, who speaks English fluently, and whose native tongue is contemporary Greek. What a great resource to have that guy just down the street! I call him Professor Panos. He cleared it up precisely.

The "professor" first conjugated the verb and then explained that the verb form of *to give* in the verse is constructed in the *they* person. He went on to say that Greek speakers and writers sometimes omit the subject and still understand the meaning from the context. So, both ways of translating are correct, but the one way explicitly conveys important information omitted by the other way.

Now that we know what Jesus meant, we can understand the proverb. It applies to the judgment others have toward those who are judgmental. Specifically, if people find me to be judgmental they will likely have a tendency to be judgmental toward me. It does **not** prohibit our application of God's standards to our lives or those of others as the critics commonly attempt to say. Indeed, the Bible indicates righteous judgment is a virtue as in:

Proverbs 21

[3] *To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

But there's a bit more to this judgment story. Despite our righteous eternal status through our covenant relationship to Jesus Christ, God still judges Christian deeds in this life.

In Hebrews 12 we learn:

[5] ... *despise not thou the **chastening** of the Lord, nor faint when [you are] rebuked of him:*

[6] *For whom the Lord **loveth** he **chasteneth**, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

[11] *Now no **chastening** for the present seem[s] to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yield[s] the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are [trained by it].*

And also in I Corinthians 11 we have:

[31] *For if we would **judge ourselves**, we should not be **judged**.*

[32] *But when we are **judged**, we are **chastened** of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

We know too that God is a righteous judge. The Bible says:

Romans 2

[11] ... *there is no respect of persons with God.*

Psalms 98 read earlier during our meditation time

[9] ... *the LORD ... come[s] to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*

and again in Psalm 119

[164] *Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy **righteous judgments**.*

Application

Let's wrap things up by pulling together what we've learned and applying it:

Radicals in this country have latched onto an idea apparently first attributed to Nazi leader Joseph Goebbels. He said to accuse your enemy of **exactly** the evil things **you** are doing. You may have heard it said that when you point the finger at someone else three fingers point back at you. The Bible says it this way:

Romans 2

[1] *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.*

[2] *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

[3] *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same,*

that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

That passage echoes what Jesus said. That is, Do not judge hypocritically. Our God will judge **all** evil righteously.

So while it is certainly true that God will discipline His children, more often than not, when anyone strays from God's precepts, they subject **themselves** to the **consequences** of their own **foolish actions**. In effect, they end up bringing trouble upon themselves. In that case, God simply steps aside, and let's it happen.

Here's a familiar passage along those lines:

James 1

[13] Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God:

for God cannot be tempted with evil,

neither tempteth he any man:

*[14] But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his **own** lust, and enticed.*

[15] Then when lust hath conceived,

it bringeth forth sin:

and sin,

when it is finished,

bringeth forth death.

Sin has consequences. The apostle Paul puts it this way:

Galatians 6

[7] Be not deceived; God is not mocked:

for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

[8] For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;

but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

That's what Jesus was saying. If we judge others harshly or hypocritically, others will judge us in the same manner. This is the natural response to sowing to the flesh. Instead, let us enlist the power of the Holy Spirit as we judge not harshly or hypocritically but in righteousness.

Proverbs 31

[9] Open thy mouth [and] judge righteously,

Benediction

Blessing,

and glory,

and wisdom,

and thanksgiving,

and honour,

and power,

and might,

be unto our God for ever and ever.

Amen. (Revelation 7:12)

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