

Sunday, November 17, 2024 pm

JUDGING RIGHTEOUSLY

John 7:24

In our text – John 7:14-24, we find Jesus engaged in another discussion with corrupt Jewish leaders. Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath and therefore they decided that He a sinner. As Jesus often did, He exposed their corrupt motives (being God, He knew their hearts) AND hypocrisy. Jesus appealed to the fact that on the Sabbath they would circumcise a male child (because it was the 8th day) and they did not condemn that behavior. But they condemned Jesus for healing someone on the Sabbath, which for Him would not require much effort. Jesus notes that He did something good by making a man completely well. This leads to the declaration, *Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment*. The point Jesus was making was simple and fundamental, BEFORE you judge make sure it is righteous (completely right).

Today, I would like to remind us about judging others. We are living in times, especially post-election, and regardless of who (or if) you voted for, when there are a lot of mischaracterizations. By many, it is deemed correct to pass judgments on others just because they disagree with you on some subject. And this is a bi-partisan behavior (happening on both sides). People are labeling others, often hatefully and ignorantly. Sadly, we see some of the same behaviors within faith-based discussions.

As Christians, we should not participate in such and in this lesson, I want to address it. I want to remind us what God's word says about judging others, including one another as brethren.

I. The wrong type of judging

- a. Our text – both the context and declaration imply that there are wrong ways to judge.
- b. Matthew 7:1-6 – a text often appealed to, to not judge at all (even in courts). But that is not what Jesus was teaching. Clearly, He is describing a certain type of judging.
 - i. Hypocritical judging – the sermon on the mount exposed the hypocrisy of many Jewish rulers. That judging is seen throughout their interactions with Jesus. They held others to a standard they themselves would not keep (cf. Matthew 23:1-5ff). The text itself speaks of being concerned about a splinter in one's eye while ignoring the beam protruding out of their own eye.
 - ii. Prejudicial judging – prejudice by definition means to prejudge. It describes one who looks at some outward characteristic and makes a blind judgment – race, nationality, gender, social status, etc. This type of judgment is harsh and unfair. Consider the Pharisee in Luke 18:10-14 – he saw a tax collector and acted as if they were all alike (and corrupt).
 - iii. Preferential judging – judging your friends (and perhaps yourself) by a different standard than how you judge others. James 2:1-4, 8-9 – clearly defines such judging as sinful.
 - iv. Judging without all the facts – our opening text – “*do not judge according to appearance*.” (John 7:24). There are many examples of jumping to conclusions before you have all the facts. Proverbs 18:13, *He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him*.
John 7:51, “*Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?*” This was an appeal by Nicodemus to be fair in their judgment of Jesus.
 - v. Judging based on YOUR standard – we need to respect the liberties of others. There are matters that we can differ about (matters about which God has been silent and is

indifferent – such as certain foods, observing days, etc.) and still be brethren – Romans 14:1-3, etc. NOTE: Be careful what you place into this category.

- c. James 4:11-12 – a call for us not to speak evil of one another and become judges. Contextually, James is clearly addressing the type of judging we have identified. He describes one who is MORE interested in judging others than keeping the laws of God. Cf. James 2:4 – judges with evil thoughts. Consider also 1 Peter 4:15 which speaks of suffering ... as a busybody in other people's affairs.
- d. Such judging is harmful and unfair. There is nothing just about such.

II. **When it is right to judge**

- a. The Bible is clear that there is a time to judge. Our context does not say, "Do not ever judge", but qualifies the type of judging that is acceptable – righteous judging.
- b. Do not cast your pearls before swine - **Matthew 7:6**. In the very text about judging, Jesus calls for us to distinguish (judge) between what is holy and profane and to NOT mix the 2.
- c. Concerning false teachers - **Matthew 7:15-20**. You will know them by their fruits. 1 John 4:1 – do not believe every spirit, but test them.
- d. The erring brother - **Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20**. Many passages call for us to look out for one another as brethren. At times, this calls for us to make a judgment. Observation: Consider **Matthew 18:15-18** - if you see a sin, GO to your brother and try to clear up the matter.
- e. Truth vs. error - 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 – the spiritual man makes judgments based upon God's word. It is about how he/she lives his life. Cf. Acts 17:11 – they searched to make a proper judgment. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 – test all things, hold fast to what is good.
- f. Good vs. evil – Ephesians 5:11 – have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. This requires informed judging. Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9ff – especially, brethren engaged in sinful behavior.
- g. Dealing with unruly members - Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-7, 2 Thessalonians 3:6. Discipline, while unpleasant, is necessary for the purity of the body and hopefully the repentance of the one who is unruly.
- h. In the courtroom – Romans 13:1-7 – God ordained government – to keep order which includes punishing evil doers. We live in a system where we can participate in that process if called to do so. Clearly, being on a jury is NOT the type of judging Jesus condemned. Again, I appeal to our text – John 7:24 – judge with righteous judgment. IF we are faithful to God, we OUGHT to be ones on the jury – doing our best with the facts before us to give a fair hearing.

III. **How to judge righteously**

- a. Examine yourself – 2 Corinthians 13:5. The very point Jesus made in His sermon. Look to yourself, before you pass judgment on others. Are you being hypocritical? Are you being HYPERcritical? Both are self-centered. Check your motives – is there genuine love? 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
- b. Take time to investigate – get ALL the facts. When we jump to conclusions without all the facts, problems will arise.
 - i. This is the key to righteous judgment.
 - ii. Try putting yourself in their situation. If possible, look for purer motives. God cares about actions, but He also cares about the reasons behind our motives.
 - iii. Check your standard – are you "rightly dividing the word of truth"? 2 Timothy 2:15.
- c. Remember the golden rule – Matthew 7:12. Always pause and ask, how you would want to be treated if the roles were reversed. Be honest about this.

- d. Give the benefit of the doubt. Look for good – 1 Corinthians 13:7 – Love bears, believes, hopes and endures.
- e. Weigh the consequences of your judgment – how will your words and actions affect the other party? Do you really want that to happen? Is this something I can forget about without consequences? How will this cause others to perceive you, especially if you are wrong? Will the world see God in you?
- f. NEVER forget that the way you judge, is how God is going to judge you – Matthew 7:1, cf. Matthew 6:14-15, James 2:13 – judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Judging is an important subject that has a bearing on both this life and the next. Let us resolve that even in this we will follow God's will. We will be better. Others will be better. The Lord's cause will be better. And in its own way, we will make the world around us just a little better. Are your judgments righteous? Think about it!