

“Who Am I to Judge?”

Luke 6: 37

Imagine if every parent would only focus on their own behavior and never judge their own children's behavior? What do you think about that? Little Billy would be smacking his brother in the face. Mom says to Dad, "Should we judge him?" And Dad says, "Who are we to judge?"

Or imagine you go home today, and you find a police car in front of your house, and a big truck in your driveway with the valuables from your house inside the truck. You go up to the police officer who is standing there doing nothing, watching these robbers steal everything from your house. But the cop says, "Who am I to judge these guys?" No, no, no, no, you want the people in authority to say that some things people do are good, but some things people do are wrong.

Even though we're very imperfect people, we need to step up and we need to judge. It sounds kind of nice when you say that we're all humans, we're all sinners, so do not judge, right?

It sounds like we are being kind, and good, and loving when we say, "Do not judge." It sounds like we are loving like Jesus loved when we do not judge anyone's behavior, ever. But when you think it through a little bit more deeply, it just doesn't work. It doesn't work in our society; it doesn't work in the church; it doesn't work in families or marriages. So, what are we supposed to do with this whole idea of judgment?

That's what I want to tackle with you today and I want to start at just basic level by defining what the word "judge" means. According to the dictionary, the word "judge," literally means to form an opinion about something. So, if you have an opinion, you are a judgmental person. For example, if you think that preschool teachers are saints, you have an opinion and you are being judgmental. If you believe that people who assault other humans are wrong and should be made to stop, you are being judgmental.

In fact, every time you pick an emoji you are being judgmental.

Thumbs up is your opinion about something. Thumbs down, that's also an opinion. The smiley face -- that's a judgement too.

When people these days say, "Do not judge," that might sound like that's the right way and only way for us to live together, but the truth is you can't get away from it.

For example, if I am standing close to you, facing you, and I cough but do not cover my cough, you could say, "Pastor, please cover your cough. I don't want to catch whatever bug you have." I could respond, "Stop judging me." Because your comment is saying that the way I cough everywhere is bad.

I would hope that if I were that rude, you would respond to me, "Then why are you judging *me*?" If I say "stop judging me," aren't I implying that you are wrong for asking me not to spray my germs all over you?

The point is there is no way to not have an opinion about anything. We all have opinions, we all think that some things are good, and that some things are bad. That some people should keep doing what they're doing, and other people should stop it and change.

The question is, how do we do this the way that Jesus wants? I think a good summary is what Jesus said in John 7. Jesus once said, ***"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."*** *John 7:24* So, Jesus doesn't say "don't judge." Instead He says, **Judge Correctly**. Make distinctions, form opinions in a way that is good in the eyes of God.

Today let's get a crash course on what the Bible teaches about judgement. There are four parts to it and I'm going to give you the four parts right up front. According to the Bible **judging Jesus' way** starts with **(1) God**, then **(2) you**, then **(3) us**, and finally **(4) grace**. God, you, us, grace. God, you, us, grace. That's how you judge correctly according to Jesus.

So, part one, God. What does that mean? Here's what it means: **We should judge by God's opinion instead of a human opinion**. If you're going to say to someone that the way

they are living is beautiful, or the way they are living is sinful, just make sure that your opinion comes out of God's heart and not just your own heart.

This is what the religious leaders of Jesus day got wrong all the time. The Pharisees were very Pharisee-ish towards Jesus. There's this one time where they watched Jesus' friends and the disciples were not following the right tradition to wash their hands. The Pharisees go off on Jesus, "Why don't your followers follow the traditions, the rules, the way that we do things? They're bad." And Jesus turned right around and said, you're bad. And here's why He said that. In Matthew 15, Jesus said, ***"They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules."*** *Matthew 15:9*

Here's an example, some people think that when you come to church to worship Jesus you should dress up. If you had a chance to meet the president, would you wear sweatpants? Would you wear flip flops? No, you would dress up. Then, when you meet the King of Kings and Lord over all lords and rulers, shouldn't you all the more dress up for Him? Other people would say, "No, you don't have to impress God. You can wear sweatpants, God doesn't care. His love isn't based on the kind of fabric that's covering your legs." So, dress up for worship or not dress up -- what's the right thing? In matters like these there are no passages about denim, belts, suits, sweats. There's nothing that God says about this. I think He would like us to make sure we are appropriately dressed. But how you dress, He simply doesn't care.

Do you know what God does care about? The heart that is beneath your shirt. If you're wearing an old faded worn out sweatshirt but your heart is sincerely here to follow God, then great! On the other hand, if you're the best dressed person in the place, but you're looking around judging people instead of thinking about Jesus, that's wrong. Let's not get distracted on the things that God says nothing about. Let's focus our attention on the things that God says a lot about.

Or how about the size of a church? Some people think that really big mega churches are too big, you're just a number, they just make you too comfortable by having a coffee bar, movie-theater-style seats, and modern music played live in rock-and-roll style. That's bad, some say. Other people say pews, and pipe organs, liturgy, and hymns that are a couple hundred years old don't connect with people's hearts today. Do you know what the Bible says about the local church? God cares about the way the people who join a church treat one another. Are we clothed with compassion and kindness, and hospitality and forgiveness? Don't get distracted by the things that God doesn't speak about, instead focus on the things that He does speak about.

We humans tend to value our own opinions too much. Let's make sure, if we're going to judge, that we start with God.

Which brings us to part two, **you**. What does that mean? According to Jesus, this means that you judge yourself first.

Jesus said, "Do not judge." If you would keep reading you would find out that Jesus is actually saying don't go off judging others before you start with you. In Matthew 7, Jesus said, **"First take the plank out of your own eye."** *Matthew 7:5* He's talking about overlooking your own sin.

So, here's a big question for you, I want you to think about the kind of voices that shape you during the week. The friends you're going to spend time with, the podcasts you listen to, the radio stations, the cable news. Just think who those voices are and then ask yourself this question, do they do what Jesus said?

When that cable news show comes on, whatever side of the aisle it's on, are the first ten minutes honest confession about what we in our group have done wrong? Or is it just throwing stones at other people?

When your friends get together and you talk about marriage or relationships, is part one of that conversation you saying here's what I really need to own up to – Here's what I didn't do Jesus's way? So much of the disunity in the world today is because we

skip this part.

I love the story of G.K. Chesterton a famous preacher. About a hundred years ago when World War I was blowing up, a newspaper asked its readers, "What's wrong? What's wrong with the world?" People are at each other's throats; people are dropping bombs and G.K. Chesterton wrote and responded with a brilliant answer that only took him eight words. What's wrong with this world? His answer, ***Dear sirs, I am. Sincerely yours, G.K.***

What's the world's biggest problem? "It's me." And if you take that to heart, you will be judgmental in just the right way. So, start with **God** and then take a long, long, long time to stand in front of the mirror and think about **you**.

Which brings us to part three, **Us**. What does this mean? I mean that according to the Bible, Christians are supposed to judge fellow Christians. People live out in the world, neighbors, family members, governments -- they are not our focus. How everyone in the world lives is not really our business. Instead, we turn inwards, and we focus on us, Christians.

In the Bible, in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, the Paul is writing to the believers whose culture was all jacked up. And he said, ***"What have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside."*** 1 Corinthians 5:12-13a

When Jesus was preaching and teaching do you know who the Roman Emperor was? His name was Tiberius. He was a classic Roman who worshipped many, many, many different Roman Gods. He wasn't way, way far away over in Rome and Jesus was in Israel. When Jesus was doing His ministry on the shores of the sea of Galilee, do you know what the biggest city just to the south of him was named? Tiberius. In fact, the Sea of Galilee had a nickname that you can find in the Bible. It was also called The Sea of... Tiberius. But despite the name of the sea and the name of the city, do you know the one guy that Jesus never went off on in His preaching? Tiberius. You would think Jesus would have had way more material for preaching about the

evils of a ruler who was worshipping many pagan gods, breaking the first commandment every morning, noon and night. But instead of focusing on that, Jesus focused His preaching on those who claim to follow the God of Israel, on His friends, on His church.

That's really important for me and you too. Jesus wants us not to spend our energy criticizing those who don't follow Jesus, who are caught in a sinful life and don't know any better. Jesus wants us to help one another follow Him more closely.

If you see someone here who claims to follow Jesus and is doing something great, judge them. Share your biblical opinion that what they're doing is good and godly. Affirm them. If you see a woman respecting her husband with her tone and with her words, pull her aside and say, "That was so Biblical and so beautiful, well done." The same with a husband who serves and honors his wife. That's judging. If you see a guy who puts away his phone so he can be a glimpse of God the Father to his little kid, tell him.

And if you see a Christ-follower taking sin lightly, then you with humility and respect say, "Hey, I struggle with this too, and doing this is not okay." If a believer is drifting away from Jesus, and they're not taking that seriously, judge them. Tell them, "If you're going to be a follower of Jesus, if you're going to call Him your king and your savior, you have to arrange your life to serve Him, you have to follow Him, and grow closer to Him. For your own good now and your good eternally, you need to change." That's hard to do.

Maybe its hardest to speak that truth lovingly to family members – to parents, to children, or grandchildren. But if they say they are Christian and they take comfort in that, but at the same time are living far away from Jesus, then, you may be the only person in their life who can speak honestly and lovingly to them to help them. Don't wait. It's your job ... and it's your privilege to do it.

So, whether it's good or it's bad, whether we are applauding or critiquing, whether we are affirming or challenging, Jesus wants us to have the kind of church where we judge each other often. That kind of a judgment-filled church is exactly what all of us need.

1st God, 2nd you, 3rd us, which brings us to our last point, it's called, "**Grace.**" I saved the best for last. Here's what that means. It means in the Bible, God's judgment is always pointing towards grace. The end goal and the hope of God's judgment is grace. So, the opinion that we want to share is a word of grace. Whether we're encouraging you or confronting you, our hope is always get back to the undeserved love that we call grace.

When someone is very vulnerable and very transparent; they admit that they messed something up and it's difficult to say. When it gets really quiet in the room and we're trying to think of what to say to someone's really honest confession, then we are to judge. Yes, we are to judge, to share God's opinion of that person. God has an opinion about those who honestly confess their sins, and His opinion ... is love. He has something to say with all authority to people who come to Him in repentance. And what He says is: forgiveness.

You might be a train wreck, your life might be a mess, your sin might be embarrassing, but when you come to God, the opinion that you and I get to share is the same opinion that God shares with us in His word: His opinion is grace, love, forgiveness, salvation.

What we have in Christianity is something the world does not have. I mean, if you confess your mess out there, what would they tell you? Try harder. Maybe, stay away from me.

What do we get to say as Christians? We say, "God love you. You know that right? -- God loves you. You know that Jesus died for that one too, right? You know that as far the east is from the west, so far has God removed that from you. The God who loved you yesterday before you did the sin is the same God who

loves you today.”

Now, you might call that preaching, you might call that teaching, but what the Bible calls it is, grace. And friends, this is exactly what Jesus lived and died and rose to give you.

Two thousand years ago on that cross, Jesus was judged so that your judgment would be different.

On that cross, Jesus was called all kinds of ugly names so that God could look at every Christian and call them beautiful names.

On the cross Jesus was accused of a thousand things He did not do so that our Heavenly Father would not accuse you of the 1,000 things you did.

On the cross, Jesus was treated like a sinner so that now God could judge every Christian as a saint.

On the cross, the skies grew dark, and God turned His face away so that now, if you are a Christian, the skies part and God's face is beaming on you, shining upon you with love and affection.

Everyone ignored and insulted Jesus on the cross, but because of Jesus, God does not ignore you and He does not insult you. Instead, He smiles and says, “Yes, I have an opinion about you. I love you. You're my kid, my son, my daughter, my friend, my treasure, my people.”

God, you, us, grace. God, you, us, grace. Can you say it with me? God, you, us, grace. One more time. God, you, us, grace. That's how you judge Jesus' way, that's how you judge beautifully. Amen.