



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 7:1-6, 12

KEY POINT(S): Christ’s followers are not called to judgmentalism, but are called to love one another well.

FOR LEADERS

- *Winter 2019 Season* – Next week is our final week of our Winter Communities Season, and now is probably a great time to talk a little logistics with your group about the upcoming weeks! We have quite a large break before Easter this year (3 weeks!) so now would be the perfect time to plan an outing with your group! Also, please join us in praying for Easter, as we often see many new folks joining us who are coming to church for the first time, or returning to church for the first time in years!
- *Spring 2019* – Our Spring 2019 Communities Season will be an abbreviated one, running the first week after Easter (April 28th) for 7 weeks, through the week of June 9th!

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Icebreaker** – “What kind of a driver are you? Do you tend to get pulled over often? Why or why not?”
- [2] Communities Video** - Watch this week’s Communities video!
- [3]** What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

“ONLY GOD CAN JUDGE ME”

In the sermon this week, Ryan mentioned that the most well-known Bible verse in our culture today has shifted from John 3:16 to Matthew 7:1. He went on to explain that despite many people “knowing” the verse, it’s not often well understood.

- [1]** In your opinion, why do you think Matthew 7:1 is now the most well-known verse in our culture? What is it about the notion of “judgment” today that has made it such a stigma in our society?
- [2]** Why do you think Christians are often seen as judgmental? Do you think this is a fair characterization?
- [3]** Which people or groups do you feel our culture tends to judge most, and to which do we most often turn a blind eye?
- [4]** What about Christians? Do you feel that there are people or groups that receive disproportionate amounts of judgment from Christians? Explain
- [5]** How does Jesus’ definition of “judgment” differ from how we typically understand it in our culture?

Leaders: The concept of “judgment,” to Christians and non-Christians alike, is a weird stigma. Most often you’ll find that people will tend to be on one polar opposite or another. We either take the hyper-aggressive stance, where we call out every single instance of sin in someone’s life demanding that they repent and change immediately, with no grace or love whatsoever, or we swing to the opposite side, where we live however we want in our sin, without any care whatsoever about God’s will for our lives because “No one can judge me.” The problem with talking about judgment in our society is that we have polarized – the truth is that neither of these views illustrate the heart of God. Jesus neither wants us to be judgmental, critical, and condemning thorns, but also doesn’t want us to be so “loving” that we allow people to continue on in their sin to their own destruction.



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SPECKS AND LOGS

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 7:1-6, 12

In our passage this week, Jesus draws a distinction between judging “rightly” and becoming judgmental, hyper critical, and completely lacking in love and grace. Ryan went on to explain that Scripture clearly tells us to make judgments (even in the Sermon on the Mount!), and that to not confront someone in their sin is to be unloving, but that we should approach them humbly, without hypocrisy, and without being harsh.

- [6] What is it, exactly, that Jesus is forbidding us from in this passage, and how do we draw a healthy distinction between judging “rightly” and becoming judgmental?
[7] Where do you, personally, struggle with having a judgmental attitude toward others and how has this compromised your ability to speak truth?

Jesus warns us that we should be careful to remove “logs” from our eyes before trying to remove “specks” from others’ eyes. At the same time, He doesn’t tell us not to address the speck, but rather to prepare before hand.

- [8] What are some rhythms or habits that we should have in our lives so that we do not become hyper sensitive to others’ sin, and completely blind to our own?

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

- [9] According to what Paul lays out for us here, what is the difference between dealing with sin with people inside of the Church and with people outside of the Church? Are there any places where you feel like the Church has failed in this regard? How can we personally brings ourselves more in line with what the Bible calls us to in this passage?

Leaders: There are two standards that we see in Scripture: 1.) How to approach Christians – our brothers and sisters in Christ – and 2.) How to approach non-Christians. With non-Christians, it’s somewhat easier because they don’t believe what the Bible teaches, and therefore we are simply to love them and share the hope of Christ with them with our words, our hearts, actions and motivations. The hope is that they would see the freedom in the lives of Christians, and want to know of the hope that they have! With Christians, it’s somewhat more difficult, in that we are all constantly affected by the brokenness of our sin, and thus we are all no “better off” than anyone else. However, Jesus makes it clear that this does not give us an excuse to simply ignore sin within our midst, but rather that we should call this out in one another’s lives – hold one another accountable. But, again, here comes the refrain from our study in Matthew – It is always a matter of the heart. We must be careful that we do not allow our sin to create in us a hardened heart of pride, arrogance, judgmentalism and criticism. We are to be ruled by Christ, motivated by love and grace, and walk in genuineness with one another.

REMOVING SPECKS

In the sermon, Ryan gave us three “attitudes” that should govern the way we “remove specks” from one another’s eyes. Those were to approach one another in humility, without being harsh or hypocritical.

- [10] What do you think are some of the “wrong” reasons to address other people’s sins? What are the right reasons for doing so?

The Bible teaches us that, even as Christians, there will always be sin in our lives that needs to be addressed (see 1 John 1:8-10 for example.) This means that confession, repentance, and approaching one another about sin will be a constant rhythm.



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- [11]** Given what Jesus says about the need to remove our own logs first, how do we balance the need to help someone deal with their sin, without being open to constant charges of hypocrisy? Does this mean that we should never approach one another? If not, why?
- [12]** Who do you know that exemplifies what it means to correct someone in a spirit of gentleness? What can you do to try to emulate their example?
- [13]** In verse 6, Jesus says that we should not “cast our pearls before swine,” or “give to dogs what is holy.” What do you think Jesus means by this, and how should this affect the way we approach someone?
- [14]** In verse 12, Jesus tells us that we should treat others the way we would want to be treated ourselves. How would you, personally, want to have someone confront you about your own sin issues? What do you do to show this same kind of grace to others?

Leaders: Gentleness in our speech, humility before others, honesty about our own sin, and love for our friends and family should be our governing motivations. Being honest with people about sin is never easy, whether that's sin in their life or our own, but what we'll find in navigating these conversations is an incredible freedom from the clutches of sin's power over us. We should walk in a spirit that loves one another so much, that we are compelled to want to love them more and more and to see the life of Christ in their lives. A wise practice is to always start with prayer, praying earnestly about our own sin, before asking for help to try and approach someone we care about.

In regard to casting pearls before swine, be careful how you understand this. This is not Jesus telling us to simply give up or walk away from those who desperately need to know the truth of the Gospel. Rather, we should be mindful of our efforts to love people well. If you're sincerely in a position where you're hoping to share the Gospel with someone who clearly could care less and is offended at your attempts to sway him or her, then perhaps your efforts would be better spent elsewhere.

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that God would reveal logs in our eyes, that we would see, clearly, that we are all earnestly affected by the brokenness of sin. Ask that God would bring everyone to a place of genuineness about where their lives are out of step with the Gospel and pray that we would have an honesty in our lives to own that.
- [2]** Thank the Lord for people in your life who have done the hard work of helping you see your own blind spots and call you to holiness.
- [3]** Pray for help in obeying Christ in the way we speak to others about sin, and pray that He would make us effective both with Christians and non-alike.