

GLENKIRK CHURCH



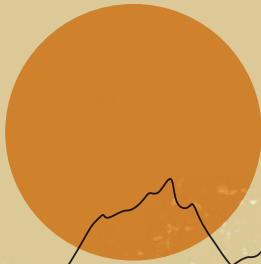
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

OCT 30 - NOV 3, 2023

Re-Formed:

Sermon on the Mount



Sermon Series 9/3 - 11/26

MONDAY

Read **Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 12:13-14; Revelation 20:11-15**

The true and living God has a sense of humor. This week's devotionals series focuses upon judging, a particularly convicting topic for this writer—I am consistently classified a “high J” (“Judgmental”) in the Myers-Briggs psychological profile. I find decision-making and judging perilously easy—Father, please help me!

“Judge not, lest you be judged” (Matthew 7:1) is among the Bible's most misunderstood and misapplied verses. It is not a call to “sloppy agápē”—that everything is permissible, as long as the source of the words, actions, thoughts or orientation is sincere and kind. Jesus instructed His followers to “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16), emphasizing discernment humbly wrapped in personal faithfulness and virtue.

“Judge not” is a call neither to naïveté nor gullibility, but to self-awareness regarding our fallen fallibility. Accordingly, we need and should trust God alone as the only ultimate, true, qualified Judge. Scripture therefore advises, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). There is a particular area wherein no mere human is qualified to judge: others' salvation. Yahweh has the singular, sovereign right, ability and holiness to determine whether another is redeemed.

Even the eternal Word of God—in coming to earth as the Man Jesus of Nazareth—exercised no right to judgment. He sidestepped the

brother's request to settle a family dispute regarding their inheritance (Luke 12:14). John 3:17 emphasizes, “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn (judge) the world, but ... that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17). Note, however, that this restraint pertains to Jesus' 1st coming mission. Upon His return, the Lord will judge all per their relationship with Him (Revelation 19:11-16, 20:11-15), distinguishing between “sheep” (faithful followers) and “goats” (unbelievers) (Matthew 25:31-46).

Do you silently cower behind “Judge not” regarding others being exploited or God Himself disrespected? If so, you misapply this principle. Alternatively, do you dismiss “Judge not” as applying only to Jesus' 1st century followers, generally acting as if “I believe everyone's entitled to my opinion”? Neither is the way of Christ. Lean upon the Spirit for help here.

QUESTIONS

How have you struggled with the “Judge not, lest you be judged” warning? What does it mean to be to “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves”? What are some common misapplications of the “judge not” directive?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministries

Ethnos Asia, headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand, is an organization founded by Asian missionaries to serve churches in the restricted-access countries of Southeast Asia. Christians in these countries are often seriously restricted by governmental policies and persecuted by anti-Christian radicals. Pray that the Ethnos Asia leaders will have God's vision and wisdom for doing His work.

TUESDAY

Read **Matthew 7:1; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; Romans 14:10-13**

Halloween newsflash: sinners sin. The Apostle Paul advised accordingly, *“For what have I to do with judging outsiders?”* (1 Corinthians 5:12). While we should be grieved by our own sin and the depravity surrounding us, condemning the unredeemed is misguided. As emphasized yesterday, *“God judges those outside.”* (v. 13) And whether Christian or not, *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

Paul’s related, rhetorical question and admonition: *“Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ... Purge the evil [churchgoer] from among you”* (1 Corinthians 5:13). Elsewhere the apostle seemingly contradicts himself: *“Why do you pass judgment on your brother? ... Let us not [judge] one another any longer”* (Romans 14:10-13). How can we reconcile all of this?

Per yesterday’s theme, we must never presume to judge others’ salvation, whether they profess Christ or not—such condemnation is above our pay grade. Regarding unbelievers, Paul asserts that we’re not to spend time judging even their behavior. This leaves us with one advisable “judging” option, as long as we do so singularly for God’s glory: believers need to be gracefully advised if their behavior appears at odds with their Christian profession (Galatians 6:1). Three things to note, however, in correcting fellow believers: Why? That they might repent and thereby restore fellowship with God (James 5:19-20). When? Only when we are “right with God”

ourselves (no unconfessed, unrepentant sin)—more about this Thursday. How? Privately (Matthew 18:15), gently (Galatians 6:1) and lovingly (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Among the issues with judging is its “horizontal,” people-facing emphasis: it often distracts from a “vertical,” heavenward, God-honoring perspective. A judging inclination frequently reflects and fuels self-righteousness, entitlement, ingratitude, envy, gossip, slander and other sorts of sinfulness, limiting one’s own growth in Christ.

The enemy loves it when Christians assume a “horizontal” stance, preoccupied with others’ behavior, what they’ve received vs. what we’ve received, etc. Heaven knows that I have much to work on; I’m still so far from the Christlikeness that God is working in me. There is a time and a place for “judging,” but it is limited and must be done God’s way.

QUESTIONS

Why are we not to judge unbelievers? In what area are we not to judge anyone, whether a professing Christian or not? What sort of judgment—in the right fashion and under right conditions—is okay when it comes to professing believers?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministries

Thank the Lord for the successful completion of the Ethnos Asia conference held at Glenkirk Church last September. The theme was “Catch the Vision,” with the goal that attendees would catch God’s vision and compassion for making disciples of the nations. About 100 conferees attended. Everything went well and attendees were richly blessed and encouraged.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Matthew 7:2; Leviticus 24:19-22; Matthew 5:38-39**

Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:2 sounds ominous and might confuse some: *"For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you."* Is Jesus here affirming the "eye for an eye" Old Testament precept (Leviticus 24:20), which He earlier addressed and deepened in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-39)? Is He sharing God's unbending means for judging?

If you are like me, you strive to understand God as well as possible. The noble aim here is to know Him better so that you can love and serve the Lord even more fully and faithfully. A darker purpose, however, can be trying to "figure God out"—perhaps even "box Him in" somewhat. This latter objective can make us lax in Bible study and reflection, dismissive of the truth that *"[God's] ways are higher than [our] ways"* (Isaiah 55:9). Moreover, it smacks of idolatry, our fallen tendency aiming to "make God in our own image."

Jesus calls us to avoid the hypocrisy that can accompany condemning others. When we judge—sometimes even putting ourselves in God's place (while dismissing Him from His rightful throne in our lives)—we can quickly overlook the fact that we, too, are recovering sinners desperately needing God's forgiveness and restoration in Christ. Hypocrisy was a critical issue among 1st century Pharisees, among those for whom Jesus shared His sharpest rebukes.

In Matthew 7:2, the Lord focuses on the higher standard which should guide His followers. While we should always strive toward general societal justice, we need to be careful when seeking it specifically regarding other perceived "offenders." We often want others to "get the judgment (punishment) they deserve" while insisting upon God's mercy and grace for ourselves. A fool demands God's unmerciful justice at all times, ignoring its consequences for them, personally, apart from Jesus' atoning sacrifice.

We're called to *"be holy, for I (God) am holy."* (Leviticus 11:44) Concurrently, however, we are to embrace God's mercy in Christ gratefully. Although sin should grieve us, following Christ should translate into our being self-aware, humble, and merciful toward others.

QUESTIONS

What are some of the problems and consequences relating to "trying to figure out God"? Where do you struggle with judgmentalism, as its source or on the receiving end? What does "A fool demands God's unmerciful justice at all times" mean to you?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministries

Ethnos Asia's key man in Vietnam, Barnabas, coordinates the work there. A month ago, while in the U.S. with his wife visiting their daughter, Barnabas' wife suddenly died from a brain aneurism. Pray for comfort for his family and for the \$13,000 needed to cover the cost for transporting his wife's remains back to Vietnam.

THURSDAY

Read **Matthew 7:3-5; Proverbs 13:24; Revelation 20:14**

While we noted the hypocrisy often accompanying judgmentalism yesterday, Jesus hits it head-on in Matthew 7:3-5. Hypocrisy is among the leading criticisms among many when justifying their non-churchgoing and dismissiveness of Christianity. Sadly, we are often “guilty as charged.”

This week we’ve considered the cautions and guidelines regarding judging, reinforcing that God alone is the ultimate, righteous Judge (James 4:11-12). Corresponding sensitivity to our fallen inclination toward hypocrisy is good. However, as attributed first to theologian Thomas Aquinas, evil is often corrupted goodness—something otherwise virtuous can be overemphasized or misapplied.

I’ve known parents so sensitive to hypocrisy that they become permissive regarding their children’s dangerous behavior. Their accompanying, “progressive” logic: “How can I correct them when I was involved with similar self-destructive behavior at their age?” The Father, being perfect, does not experience such issues personally. God calls we who are parents to lovingly discipline children for their benefit (Proverbs 13:24), even regarding areas where we’ve sinned. Integrity is not license for perilous irresponsibility.

Did you know that there will come a time when we are equipped and free to judge others without limits or concerns regarding hypocrisy? Upon Jesus’ return, we will be resurrected into glorified bodies, the

fall’s curse reversed. God will have completed His redemptive work—we will be truly Christlike and sinless. Death—sin’s consequence—will be destroyed (Revelation 20:14). We will no longer have a “log ... in your own eye” disqualifying us from seeing the “speck ... [in] your brother’s or sister’s eye.” (Matthew 7:3-5) However, upon our full restoration along with that of all creation, such judging will be unnecessary—all of God’s children will be glorified and pure at that time.

None of us in our current fallenness exhibits 100% integrity continually. However, overcompensating such that we might imperil children or others is ungodly. We need to be clear and real about our sins, offering them to God repentantly. Concurrently, we are to walk joyfully and faithfully in the knowledge of forgiveness in Christ and Jesus’ future return, whereupon He will set all things right. What a glorious day awaits us—share this good news with others!

QUESTIONS

How might we overcompensate for concerns regarding hypocrisy? What “log ... in your own eye” might you need to deal with before lovingly correcting a brother’s or sister’s behavior? What irony relates to the time when believers will be able to judge others without consequences?

PRAYERS

For **Ethnos Asia Ministries**

Ethnos Asia is holding its biennial mission conference in Bangkok, Thailand, February 27-29, 2024. At this conference, workers serving in fourteen countries in Asia will give reports on the progress of God’s work in those countries. Pray that some Glenkirk Church people might attend. If you are interested in attending, contact David Woo (woo.david.k@gmail.com).

FRIDAY

Read **Matthew 7:1-6, 10:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**

In the final verse of Matthew 7:1-6, Jesus seemingly pivots away from judging and hypocrisy. What does “*Do not give dogs what is holy ... [nor] cast your pearls before swine*” (v. 6) have to do with this week’s greater emphasis? As well, didn’t the Savior elsewhere command that we “*make disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28:19)?

We are not others’ judges. We are, however, to be discerning—in sending out His disciples, Jesus characterized this as being “*wise as serpents.*” (Matthew 10:16) “We are not to have a spirit of condemnation towards fallen people. We are to love them, be concerned for them, pray for them ... But we are still supposed to have discernment—to be able to distinguish between what is righteous and what is unrighteous.” (Ligonier Ministries)

“Scripture embraces the value of seeking to convince others of the truth (Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 3:15; Acts 17:2). However, there is a difference between speaking to the willing, versus wasting time on the hard-hearted.” (BibleRef) “We are not to expose the gospel ... to those ... [whose] purpose [is] to trample it and return to their own evil ways. ... When it becomes apparent that the gospel is not welcome, we ... move on. We are responsible to share the good news; we are not responsible for people’s response to the good news.” (GotQuestions.org)

Recall that Jesus was silent before many of His accusers—including Herod, much of His time with Pilate, amidst His false “trial” by the Sanhedrin, etc. Jesus thus fulfilled prophecy (Isaiah 53:7). His silence here likewise demonstrated discernment. The Lord would “*not give dogs what is holy ... [nor] cast ... pearls before swine.*”

We are called to faithfulness, thus our need to “*preach the word ... in season and out of season*” (2 Timothy 4:2). In faithfully “scattering the seed” of the Gospel, we entrust the resultant “harvest” to God. However, we are not to waste time on “deaf ears” or hard hearts, nor to get into pointless arguments benefitting no one. “Casting pearls before swine” isn’t an act of love towards the unbeliever (Matthew 5:16); it’s simply a waste of God-given resources.” (BibleRef)

QUESTIONS

Was Jesus being harsh or indifferent toward the lost upon teaching “*Do not give dogs what is holy ... [nor] cast your pearls before swine*”? What does it mean to be “*wise as serpents*”? What areas of your walk with Christ have you been wrestling periodically with discernment?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministries

In Laos, Asia, a leader among the Bru tribe has been imprisoned for three months. He already has led fifteen inmates to Christ. Pray that these new believers will be discipled in the faith and that the leader, while imprisoned, will continue to have the freedom to witness for Christ with a Spirit-empowered message.

Sources

- Ligonier Ministry's quote is from <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/difference-between-being-judgmental-and-exercising-discernment>.
- BibleRef's quotes can be found at www.bibleref.com/Matthew/7/Matthew-7-6.html.
- GotQuestions.org's quote is from <https://www.gotquestions.org/pearls-before-swine.html>.

