



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for July 26, 2020**  
**"From the Mount: Judge Not"**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb**  
**Scripture: Matthew 7:1-6**

## **Don't Jump to Conclusions**

When it comes to others we can be all too quick to jump to conclusions.

I like the story of the owner of a large manufacturing plant who decided to make a surprise tour to see what was going on. He was walking through the warehouse when he noticed a young man lazily leaning against some packing crates with his hands in his pockets doing nothing.

The owner walked up to him none too pleased. "Son," he said, "how much are you paid a week?"

The young man's eyes got rather big and he said, "Five hundred dollars."

With that the owner pulled out his wallet, peeled off five one hundred dollar bills, gave it to him and said, "Here's a week's pay, now get out of here and don't ever come back."

Without a word the young man stuffed the money in his pocket and took off. The warehouse manager, who was standing nearby, stared in amazement. The owner walked over to him and asked, "How long has that lazy guy been working for us?"

The manager replied, "Boss, he doesn't work here, he was just delivering a package."

When it comes to others we can be all too quick to jump to conclusions, particularly when we don't know all the facts. Jesus had something to say about such things and he shares them in his Sermon on the Mount. Let's hear what he has to say.

### **Matthew 7:1-6**

*"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

*"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

*"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."*

## **A Tough, Challenging Word**

While pastor at St. Paul Church I led a 6:30 a.m. Saturday morning Bible Men's Study. It was awfully early for a Saturday morning. We had a pretty eclectic group with a wide range of ages and perspectives. We went line by line in the Bible, studying one book at a time.

We were studying Matthew and came to Matthew 7:1 where Jesus says, "*Judge not, lest you be judged.*" Upon reading that verse one of the more crusty guys in the group blurted out, "That's the stupidest thing I have ever heard."

I really didn't know what to say except to remind him that what we had just read was a direct quote from Jesus. "*Judge not, lest you be judged,*" he says. Christ challenges each and every one of us at this point. What Jesus says might be tough, but it certainly isn't stupid.

My friend didn't back down. "We judge all the time," he said, "we can't help but make assessments about people." In that regard, my friend was right.

In fact, a little bit later, in Matthew 7:15-16 Jesus himself says, "*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.*"

Recognizing those false prophets for who they are takes a discerning spirit and more than a little bit of assessment. Let's face it. We make assessments all the time about people. First impressions have a lasting effect, as do those that come later.

In saying though "*judge not, lest you be judged,*" Jesus has other thoughts in mind and on those my friend had sorely missed the point, and, regrettably, we do as well. Jesus speaks out against a self-righteous, smug, if not, arrogant spirit. Jesus doesn't want us judging hypocritically or self-righteously.

## **A Judgmental Spirit**

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks very pointedly against a judgmental spirit because he knows just how destructive such a spirit can be. Jesus knew that a judgmental spirit has a way of building walls, closing off conversation, and hurting relationships.

Our country is characterized by such a spirit. People are divided along socio-economic, racial, ethnic, and political lines. Such divisions leave us tearing one another apart. These past few weeks there's been one protest after another that have brought these things to light.

Can you imagine armed militia on opposite sides of the issue facing one another on the streets of Louisville? Not in our wildest imagination, or so we thought. Even the church is in on the act. Salvos are launched between conservatives and liberals, one more critical than the other. Such disunity has to bring great sadness to our Lord.

## **Dealing with Prejudice**

We are quick to pre-judge and in the same breath say, "There's not a prejudiced bone in my body." We tend to look on the outside rather the inside.

The story is told of a man who years ago was sailing for Europe on one of those great transatlantic ocean liners.

After seeing his accommodations, he went to the purser's desk and asked if he could leave his gold watch in the on-board safe. The man explained that he didn't ordinarily do such things, but he had been to his room, met his roommate, and judging from his appearance the man was afraid his roommate might not be all that trustworthy.

The purser took the valuables, but said, "I'll be glad to take care of your things, but just so you know your roommate has been here as well. He left his valuables for the very same reason."

The Arbinger Institute in its book, *Leadership and Self-Deception* writes about the importance of "getting outside the box." Relating to others, "outside the box" means viewing others as people, and not so much as objects or a means to an end.

Martin Luther King, Jr. in his great "*I Have a Dream*" speech said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Racial prejudice abounds because we refuse to get to know one another. Hearing one another's stories goes a long way toward healing the divide. Considering what it means to walk in another person's shoes does as well.

Seeing people as God sees them heals the divide even more. Doing so stills the currents of a critical spirit as effectively as anything can. At an even deeper level, an attempt to see God in those people will do so even more.

We are all too quick to act as judge and jury when we are neither. God didn't appoint us as judge. He's the judge and we need to remember that. We criticize unfairly because we don't always know another person's circumstance or their motives. Only God, who is aware of all the facts, is able to judge righteously.

I found myself taken by this installment from the devotional book, *Jesus Calling*. *Jesus Calling* is written in the first person as if Jesus himself is talking.

*"My children make a pastime of judging one another—and themselves. But I am the only capable Judge, and I have acquitted you through my own blood. Your acquittal came at the price of my unparalleled sacrifice. That is why I am highly offended when I hear my children judge one another or indulge in self-hatred. If you live close to me and absorb my word, the Holy Spirit will guide and correct you as needed. There is no condemnation for those who belong to me."*

### **Coming to Grip with God's Grace**

When it comes down to it, at the heart of a critical spirit is a lack of grace. You know the Golden Rule. "*Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.*" Let's turn that just a bit. Let's "*do unto others what God is doing unto you.*"

It would stand to reason that if we have truly understood God's grace, then we will be more gracious to other people. We will love as we have been loved. We will show grace as we have been shown grace. We will judge as we have been judged.

Yielding ourselves to the richness of God grace enables that grace not only to pour **into** our hearts, but **out of** our hearts as we relate to other people.

Evangelist Paul Washer writes, "Christians, you worship God for his unconditional love, compassionate mercy, and lavish grace. So then why do you refuse to offer those very things to other people?"

## **The Boomerang Effect**

Jesus puts us on alert. *“For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.”* That alone ought to give us pause. If we really believed that, we would certainly be a lot less judgmental.

*“What goes around comes around,”* says the old phrase. You know about the boomerang. You pitch it into the air in just the right way and it will come back to you. That’s the way it is when it comes to judging others with a critical, self-righteous spirit. Our sin has a way of coming back to haunt us.

## **Dealing with the Plank in Our Own Eyes**

Jesus has little patience with those who see flaws in everyone else, but fail to see the flaws in their own lives. In a word, Jesus wants us to deal with *“the plank”* in our own eye before we ever concern ourselves with *“the speck”* in our neighbor’s eye.

I have heard it said, *“We are all too ready to view our own faults with a telescope, while viewing the faults of our neighbors with a microscope.”* Suffice it to say, none of us are perfect, yet some go right on living as if they are. They fail to notice the condition of their hearts. The thing about having a plank in your eye is that it has a way of blinding you to what’s really going on. The interesting thing about a wagging, judgmental finger is that there are four others pointing back at the one wagging the finger.

We’d do well to recognize that when we’re prone to be critical. So often those who are quick to point out the flaws of another person are really pointing out flaws that are a part of their own lives. That’s why Jesus is so adamant about us dealing with our own failings, before we ever think about dealing with the failings in another person’s life.

Let’s admit it every one of us has a pretty good case of plank eye and we do well to deal with it. Better yet, we’d do well to let God deal with it. He is the great healer, after all. When it comes to the plank in our own eyes, nothing but the grace of God is able to free us from what ails us.

And as we let God have his way we will see things in a much better light and find ourselves better able to understand those around us.

Whenever I get something in my eye, I immediately go to the mirror to see what’s going on. Sometimes I even ask for help. It’s not easy to remove what causes so much discomfort, but once it’s out there is nothing but sweet relief.

## **Who Am I to Judge?**

All of us are challenged by Christ to consider how we too are judgmental. *“Who am I to judge?”* is a question we should be asking all the time.

In John 8:7 Jesus challenged a group of religious leaders about them wanting to stone a woman who was caught in adultery. Their minds were set and they were ready to get on with it until Jesus said, *“If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”*

And with that they began to walk away, one by one. And so should we, when it comes to a critical spirit.