

"A FAITH-SHAPED LIFE: JUDGING"

Luke 6:37-42

Jesus said at the beginning of verse 37- "Do not judge, and you will not be judged." In 1884 a young man died, and after the funeral his grieving parents decided to establish a memorial to him. With that in mind they met with Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University. Eliot received the unpretentious couple into his office and asked what he could do. After they expressed their desire to fund a memorial, Eliot impatiently said, "Perhaps you have in mind a scholarship." "We were thinking of something more substantial than that... perhaps a building," the woman replied. In a patronizing tone, Eliot brushed aside the idea as being too expensive and the couple departed. The next year, Eliot learned that this plain pair had gone elsewhere and established a \$26 million memorial named Leland Stanford Junior University, better known today as Stanford! (*Today in the Word*, June 11, 1992) Charles Eliot, the President of Harvard University certainly judged the Standfords wrong, wouldn't you agree?

I think it is fair to say that we all judge and we make what we can label judgment calls- the issue is what is behind our motive of judging?

When I go grocery shopping I judge one brand over another- price might be a factor but so might quality. If there are two teachers teaching the same grade in the same school I can judge one teacher over the other and hope and maybe even petition that my child gets the one that I have deemed the better teacher or the one that would be suit my child's leaning style or the one who could help my child learn the best. Do you get the picture? We make judgments every day. So maybe the issue is there are appropriate and inappropriate times to judge- are we getting closer? And let me say another thing, just because you disagree with someone and you state your position doesn't mean you are judgmental it might just mean you are making judgments. Let me explain.

[One day] at a... gathering of seminary professors, one teacher reported that at his school the most damaging charge one student can lodge

against another is that the person is being “judgmental.” He found this pattern very upsetting. “You can’t get a good argument going in class anymore,” he said. “As soon as somebody takes a stand on any important issue, someone else says that the person is being judgmental. And that’s it. End of discussion. Everyone is intimidated!” Many of the other professors nodded knowingly. There seemed to be a consensus that the fear of being judgmental has taken on epidemic proportions. Richard Mouw in his book *Uncommon Decency* (pp. 20-21) writes the following on this issue of being judgmental when he wrote, “Is the call for civility just another way of spreading this epidemic? If so, then I’m against civility. But I really don’t think that this is what being civil is all about. Christian civility does not commit us to a relativistic perspective. Being civil doesn’t mean that we cannot criticize what goes on around us. Civility doesn’t require us to approve of what other people believe and do. It is one thing to insist that other people have the right to express their basic convictions; it is another

thing to say that they are right in doing so. Civility requires us to live by the first of these principles. But it does not commit us to the second formula.

To say that all beliefs and values deserve to be treated as if they were on a par is to endorse relativism—a perspective that is incompatible with the Christian faith and practice. Christian civility does not mean refusing to make judgments about what is good and true. For one thing, it really isn't possible to be completely nonjudgmental. Even telling someone else that she is being judgmental is a rather judgmental thing to do!"

So let's look at what Jesus is saying about this notion of judging.

First, **Jesus' admonition to Stop Judging and Stop Condemning is understandable after what has been said in verses 27-36.** Jesus has just told His listeners to, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." He also talked about how we should not deal any differently with those who hate us as compared with those who love us.

So what Jesus seems to be dealing with is that some people in the group He is speaking to are finding it difficult dealing with life's inequities and injustices. And so some in the crowd are judging and condemning those people whom God seems to, well, let's just say, God seems to be letting them slide; letting them off the hook. I mean, it comes back to that "fairness" issue again, doesn't it? And so since God isn't able to get it "right" we need to step in and take care of business. We want to live under the reign of God and be "Kingdom People" but there are some great tensions and issues that we have to work through. Let me say in a sentence what the problem is- **there is a tension in a kingdom of God living where celebrations and parties are given for prodigals or wayward people who mess up and then return, there is a tension when despised tax collectors and sinners are welcome to the table of Jesus.** And how about this tension that many will argue- **doesn't forgiveness cancel justice?** Isn't it true, mercy and justice are always in tension with each

other? And I can only imagine that these followers of Jesus, that He is speaking to, want justice. I mean, for heaven's sake, I want justice, don't you? Verses 37-38 are clear about this. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." Justice. Right?

It has been said, "Without justice and fairness, grace degenerates into permissiveness, just as justice without grace hardens into cruelty."

Well, in verses 27-36 of this 6th chapter of Luke, Jesus has been talking about kindness and mercy. And now the discussion focuses in on fairness, of measure for measure, of reward and punishment. And yet, even verse 38 where we read, "For the measure that you give will be the measure you get back" has an interesting caveat where, at the beginning of verse 38 it says, "a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will

be put into your lap.” What I read in this is abundant generosity is poured into the lap of the one who gives. The phrase, “poured into your lap” is a reference to the big pocket that a belt and the fold in a robe just above the belt would create. What this means is that even the big pocket would not be big enough to contain the pressed down, shaken together, running over blessings that come as a result of one’s generosity.

A few years ago, Alex Dovalés was drifting to Miami on a rickety boat with 27 other Cubans. A year later, he was an angel. Fourteen exhausted and penniless Cuban rafters washed ashore on Key Largo. The rafters had spent 4 days huddled in an 18-foot raft with little water and a few rusted cans filled with meat. Dovalés looked at them and thought—“I had just arrived myself.” The 25-year-old, who clears \$197 per week as a dishwasher, walked home and gathered all the presents from under his Christmas tree. He gave the gifts—each containing shirts and other clothing—to the new arrivals. “They were wet and cold,” said, Henry Paez,

Dovales's roommate. "Alex took off his shirt and gave it to them." Covales said he didn't give it a second thought. "They had nothing," he said. You see, sometimes it is the receiver of the generosity, sometimes it is the giver and sometimes it is both who are blessed.

In the last section of this passage Jesus turns His attention to the eye. In verses 39-40 He speaks of blindness and in verses 41-42 He speaks of impediments in one's eye that distracts seeing. Jesus teaches a parable in verses 39-40 that addresses leadership who lead and guide others but who have an issue. And the issue is that this leader has this mentality- "do as I say, not as I do." The problem is the leader hasn't bought into the program and is nothing more than a hypocrite. And so disciples who follow such a person who is blind and hypocritical can expect to be no different than the leader.

Does the name, Charles Barclay mean anything to you? Charles, or "Sir Charles" is a retired professional [basketball](#) player.

Nicknamed "**Sir Charles**," for his aggressive and outspoken demeanor, and "**The Round Mound of Rebound**," for his unusual build and talent as a player, Barkley established himself as one of the [National Basketball Association](#)'s most dominating [power forwards](#). In 1993 when he declared that sports figures should not be considered role models. He argued, "I think the media demands that athletes be role models because there's some jealousy involved. It's as if they say, this is a young black kid playing a game for a living and making all this money, so we're going to make it tough on him. And what they're really doing is telling kids to look up to someone they can't become, because not many people can be like we are. Kids can't be like Michael Jordan." What Charles might argue is that a leader's personal life should be kept separate from his or her professional life.

But in contrast to this we find at the time Luke's gospel was written a culture where modeling behavior, especially by a teacher or rabbi, was one of their primary responsibilities.

The student learned in Jesus and Luke's day by modeling or imitating the teacher, the rabbi. Time and time again in the New Testament we read of this type of teacher-disciple relationship. And let's be honest, in most, in most congregations today the behavior of its leaders and the skills of its leaders are not separated. Is Luke somehow saying that mistakes and imperfections disqualify a leader? NO. But the issue is not so much the flaws as it is one's stubbornness and unwillingness to hold the mirror up to him or herself and be self-critical and honest with themselves.

That is why Jesus turns again to the eye and discusses the log and the speck. I mean, just think about it, how can a person with a log in their eye try to help the person with a speck in their eye? Here is the point- the person who cannot be self-critical can easily slip into a spirit of moral superiority. I mean it would be easy to try and "fix" the other person's problems, and it might even be socially and religiously accepted, without

being willing to look oneself in the mirror and begin to work on the one whose reflection is being seen.

I know our passage speaks of a disciple and a teacher, but it also speaks of a friend and a neighbor. I guess the bottom line is we all, I mean we all need to look at ourselves in the mirror, check our motives and make sure of our motives.

I leave you with this true story that comes from H. A. Ironside's little book, Illustrations of Bible Truths. In his book he related an incident that really puts this issue of judging in perspective. Bishop Potter "... was sailing for Europe on one of the great transatlantic ocean liners. When he went on board, he found that another passenger was to share the cabin with him. After going to see the accommodations, he came up to the purser's desk and inquired if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that ordinarily he never availed himself of that privilege, but he had been to his cabin and had met the man who was to occupy the

other berth. Judging from his appearance, he was afraid that he might not be a very trustworthy person. The purser accepted the responsibility for the valuables and remarked, 'It's all right, bishop, I'll be very glad to take care of them for you. The other man has been up here and left his for the same reason!' (Our Daily Bread) Amen.

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Judging, judgment calls, judgmental

What Jesus is saying about judging?

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There is a tension in a Kingdom of God living where celebrations and parties are given for prodigals or wayward people who mess up and then return, there is a tension when despised tax collectors and sinners are welcome to the table of Jesus

An argument- doesn't forgiveness cancel justice?

Now the discussion focuses on fairness, of measure for measure, of reward and punishment vs. 38

The last section Jesus turns His attention to the eye vs. 39-42
Vs. 39-40-- blindness; vs. 41-42 – impediments in one's eye

Former NBA star "Sir" Charles Barclay

The person who cannot be self-critical can easily slip into a spirit of moral superiority

Conclusion: we all need to look at ourselves in the mirror, check our motives, and make sure of our motives