

Introduction – Don't Judge – In the Series A Beautiful Life

I wonder how many of the following you have heard? Which of them come from the Bible?

“Don't judge a book by its cover” (George Elliot)

“There but for the grace of God go I” (English reformer, John Bradford, referring to people who were judged and condemned to die)

“First take the beam out of your own eye” (Jesus in Matthew 7:5)

“Here I stand, so help me God” (supposedly Martin Luther when being judged as a heretic in 1517)

“Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone” (Jesus in John 8:7 to those judging a woman caught in adultery)

“By the grace of God I am what I am” (Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:10 referring to his days when judged and persecuted the church before his conversion).

“With the measure you use it will be measured to you” (Jesus, Mt. 7:2)

“Before you falsely judge... walk a mile in his moccasins” (Mary Lathrap in her poem Judge Softly, pointing to the importance of empathy)

“Don't judge, or you too will be judged” (Jesus in Matthew 7:1)

“Those who measure themselves by themselves are not wise” (1 Cor. 10:12)

These quotes show that the subject of judging others is vast, and cannot be dealt with fully in this message. So we are going to look together only at the paragraph of Matthew 7:1-6, in the Sermon on the Mount.

Mat 7:01-06 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 "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? 4 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?

5 "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.

6 "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 then turn and tear you to pieces."

12 "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

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Two of the most frequent slams against Christians today are "Don't judge" and "The church is full of hypocrites."

It is good to hear that it was Jesus who said, "Don't judge".

And He was first to make the accusation, "You hypocrites".

Both are here in this passage!

We could sum this passage up by combining them: “Don’t judge hypocritically!” The two need to be put together, to make sense of each other. If you forget everything else, this will sum it up. So, what can we learn from this paragraph? Why is it so important for our theme, “The Beautiful Life”?

We’ll try to follow Jesus’ train of thought as we prepare ourselves to take communion, at this Lord’s Table.

Jesus starts out with something everyone would agree on:

1. Let us become aware of what we are doing to each other

“Do not judge or you too will be judged” (7:1, 2)

a. “Who’s to judge?” we often

hear. But when we think about it, aren’t we expected to make judgements about some things? At the end of this paragraph Jesus is expecting us to make judgments

about the way people will handle any wisdom we have, and warns that we are not to cast our pearls to pigs, nor to give what is sacred to dogs. If that’s not being judgmental, then what is? In fact we are judgmental all the time. We have to be!

We distinguish one thing from another almost instinctively;
We make first impressions, snap decisions about safety,...;
We make selections about food, what news to watch, who to befriend.

We’re expected to be discerning, to judge all things (1Cor. 2:15);

1

Let’s become aware of what we are doing to each other

*“Do not judge,
or you too will be judged” (7:1, 2)*

But isn't there a problem with the way we make judgements?

b. The problem with our judging

It's more than making decisions – decisions lead to actions; Our personal judging is **faulty and partial**, without the full picture that God has about the people we judge – He is the perfect and final Judge;

If our judging leads to others to feeling condemned, that can bounce back against us, when others do the same to us!

It can begin at a young age: My 12 year old story is a case in point. My two gymnastic team buddies said the same thing to me about each other, on two separate occasions: "Don't tell him, but I think that Al/Bill just wants to be number 1." I looked back on that and thought that they were probably saying the same thing about me! There was rivalry in the team that went further than pure competition. They were judging each other's motives.

One judging action leads to another – a destructive cycle – individuals with individuals, family feuds, to international wars!

Even if you are not a Christ-follower you will not find it difficult to agree with Jesus when He warns, *"For with whatever judgement you judge you will be judged, and with whatever measure you measure it will be measured again to you"* (7:2).

The Apostle Paul warns, *"If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other"* (Galatians 5:15).

The way we judge:

"I'll do to you what you do to me"

"For with whatever judgement you judge, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured again to you" (7:2)

The result easily leads to these:

(1) We might perpetuate the problem with “I’ll do to you what you do to me”; or

(2) We might intensify it with “You don’t seem to be hurting like I am, so I’ll increase the voltage, or choose a bigger caliber shot, ‘till I see you hurting as I do”; or,

(3) we can freeze the relationship, like this: “You will get nothing from me until you start treating me the way that I think you should.”

But, you know that what happens next, don’t you: Anyone you treat that way might come back at you with “I’ll do what you deserve because of what you’re doing to me.” This is not rocket science.

This is partly what Jesus meant when He said, *“For with whatever judgement you judge you will be judged, and with whatever measure you measure it will be measured again to you”* (7:2).

Now, not all of us struggle with such things. Some of you are wonderfully tolerant, patient and peace-loving. But those of us who identify with this painful and angry way of relating to others might agree that going around in circles like this does no one any good. It only makes things worse, and causes more pain. “Two wrongs don’t make a right,” they say. So that’s why the first point of Jesus leads us to state it like this:

> **Let us become aware of what we are doing to each other**

When Jesus says, “Don’t judge or you too will be judged,” he is pointing us to the Golden Rule in its negative form. He is pointing away from “I’ll deal with you as you are treating me.” He is teaching that the judging cycle has to stop.

“Don’t judge if you don’t want to be judged.”

Or it could be put like this.

**The Golden Rule is put
negatively in verse 1**

- “**Don’t do** to others what
you **don’t want** them to **do** to you”

**The Golden Rule is then put
positively in verse 12:**

- “**Do** to others what you **want** them to **do** to you”

In order to get to verse 12, we have to first stop the cycle of taking
each other down.

The Golden Rule (negatively):

“Don’t do to others what you don’t
want them to do to you” (7:1)

The Golden Rule (positively):

“Do to others what you want them
to do to you” (7:12)

How do we do that? Verse 3 introduces an interesting thought:

*“3 Why do you look at the speck [of sawdust] in your brother's
eye but the beam in your own eye is of no concern to you?”*

(Fraser’s translation).

c. **There is a transition after verse 2**, which is not dealt with by
Matthew but is assumed by the time we read this statement in verse
3. It might go something like this:

“Ok, let’s get together and stop the cycle of demeaning,
condemning and hurting one another. I agree. Something’s got
to change. I see that you have a problem, so I’ll help you solve
your problem, then we move forward together.

There is a speck in your eye that keeps you from seeing me the
way that I deserve to be seen. It is because of your wrong view

of me that I get to be so badly treated. So let's get that out of the way, and **then you can see me clearly, to treat me the way I should be treated.** I can help you by pointing out what's wrong with you and where you've come from; and when you've changed then we can get on with our lives together."

Of course, the crowd that Jesus speaks to picks out immediately the problem of that kind of talk. Let's slow this down. Can you picture the crowd murmuring about that one-sidedness! Then Jesus gets them rolling with laughter in agreement, as He shows the ridiculous picture of the speaker's eye!

"Why do you look at the splinter in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the beam in your own eye?" (7:3)

And this easily leads to what Jesus says next:

"You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye" (7:5a)

2. Let us sort ourselves out first

“You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye” (7:5a)

Again, the crowd would totally agree with Jesus, when He says, “You hypocrite” Why might I be a hypocrite? Because I’m judging someone else without judging myself first! “Firs” is key.

a. Move from speck mode to beam or plank mode

We have to stop focusing on the speck in the other’s eye, and pay attention to what is in ours.

“**First**, take the beam out of your own eye”! What is this beam? Why didn’t Jesus say, “First take the speck out of your own eye?”

b. The beam is not just a large speck. It is certainly possible that others can see that my problems are bigger than theirs. But the text does not say that others see the beam in my eye. The text is rendered in a way that it is also Heaven that sees that I have a beam in my eye. What is the ridiculous beam?

To answer that question we need to recall what Jesus has been teaching. Remember that Jesus’ main charge to the audience is, “*What makes you different from anyone else?*”

“*What distinguishes you from the pagans?*” (5:47);

“*How are you more noble than those who have no time for the Kingdom of God?*”; and

“*How is your righteousness better than the Scribes and Pharisees?*” (5:20)

2

Let us sort ourselves out first

“You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye” (7:5a)

Remember, too, that in the previous chapter He urges, “*Don’t be like the pagans; don’t be like the hypocrites*” (Matthew 6:1-7).

Postively, Jesus is calling the crowd, and especially His disciples, to the Beautiful Life, where we pray for our Heavenly Father to be honored, and for His will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven. The Beautiful Life takes on the citizenship of Heaven as a good son takes upon himself his father’s honour and vision. He images his father. Jesus did this perfectly, and calls us into Himself to share in that perfect relationship.



Jesus’ main challenge to His disciples and to the crowd is to be as different here as the will of Heaven is different from the way of this world. This is our responsibility.

Instead of doing to each other what is being done to us, we are to rise above the cycle of treating others as they treat us. Instead of darkening and breaking others down, we are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth – a Beautiful Life, in the image of God, imaging our Father as children who love and learn of His character.

Speck attitudes say, “Let’s fix you up first”

Attitudes of the Kingdom say, “The Kingdom’s work starts in me.”

We have a responsibility to break the cycle – to be the first to stop the spin of unjust handling of one another. That’s the challenge of the beam! Jesus says, “You hypocrite” (7:5),

because there is something wrong with claiming **Heaven's** citizenship and living out the ways of the Kingdom **of this world**.

Why do people say, *"You're supposed to be a Christian"*? I submit to you that by the Spirit's convicting work in their lives they recognize beams when they see them, even though they might have the unwillingness to deal with their own splinters & specks.

They might well be able to see beams and planks that block out the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus put it this way, more bluntly to the Pharisees, who should have known better:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to" (Matthew 23:13).

He called them *"Blind guides"* (23:16, 24).

This is Heaven's view of the problem.

We have come now to the next important questions: Where do our beams and planks come from? Why do we have them?

c. If we are to move out of speck mode into beam and plank mode, we need to see that the beam in our eye comes from a wooden and hardened heart that is blocking the light of the Kingdom of Heaven coming in and shining out.

When our hearts are dark it's not surprising if we find it difficult to see Heaven's work in our lives and in the lives of others.

So here's the tough question, "Can we see others with Heaven's spiritual eyes?" Can we God's love for those we are judging?

Perhaps you can see now that chapter 7 of Matthew is applying the Lord's Prayer in ways that challenge our souls?

Jesus said in the previous chapters, "22 *"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"* (6:22, 23).

Here's the thing. When Jesus says, "First take the beam out of your own eye" He is giving us the responsibility to recognize any problems in us that blind us from Heaven's hope and work in our lives. He is calling for a personal check for any planks and beams that shut the doors for those responding to the Gospel. He is expecting us to pull out, chop off, cast away, or kill off anything that causes us to perpetuate a cycle of hurtful and dark ways of relating to others.

So, a beam held in our eye is the our failure to take Heaven's responsibility upon us to be first at the Cross, and to be the first to follow the Father's will on earth as in Heaven; to be the first to stop the destructive cycle of focussing on what we don't like about each other, and instead to demonstrate by example our own need of the mercy of the Saviour and of our responsibility to feel something of Heaven's sorrow and pain over what my brother or sister has come through. So, here we have from Jesus:

d. "First, take the beam out of your own eye"

The responsibility of removing the beam is two-fold:

i. **“Take the beam out of your own eye” means this:**

Judge yourself first. Pull out whatever is hindering “First Love” for Jesus; to dig deeply in my heart and respond with a huge and single “Yes” to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness in my relationships with those to whom God has called me.

How do I do that? I believe the answer lies in the beginning of Jesus Sermon on the Mount: Return to the Beautiful Attitudes of the Beautiful Life.

ii. **See myself on common ground at the Cross with the person I’ve been judging.**

Instead of judging and condemning a person, I mourn their condition as I mourn my own.

Instead of doing to them what they do to us, we may grieve over their spiritual need as we grieve over our own spiritual poverty.

We may long for their spiritual recovery and fullness as we hunger and thirst for righteousness.

We may abandon our self agenda’s as we seek for the purity of heart that earns from others the trust of our words and actions.

We may work for their peace as we bend will and heart to be Heaven’s peace-makers, not to be a trouble-maker – and so on.

> The only place where judging can take place is at the Cross where Jesus took my beam on Himself, in my place. There it is removed. And on it He was crucified!

There, as I cry out, “*God, be merciful to **me**, a sinner*”, I find myself given the sight to see clearly how to be Heaven’s help to others instead of condemning them (Luke 18:13).

There I join with Elijah and say, *“Lord, I’m no better than those who have preceded me”* (1 Kings 19:4).

Or, with Isaiah, before his real ministry, he looks into the face of God and cries out, *“Woe is me, for I am undone. I am an unclean person, and guilty, among the unclean, for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty”* (Isaiah 6:5).

With such a spiritual poverty, we gain a beam-removing heart, like David who pleaded with God, *“9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. 10 Create in **me** a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. 13 **Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.”*** (Psalm 51:9-13).

Here David was coming to God for the removal of the beam in his eye, not just for the forgiveness of what he had done against God and against Uriah’s wife and

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extended family, but he was repenting also for the orientation of his life that had blinded him and hindered him from God’s work. Then he knew he would be able to see again to work with others who had turned their eyes from God.

> Here at the Communion Table, likewise, we come to remove

the beams from our own eyes. As Jesus said, this is our first work, before we work with others. Here is His call to share in His work.

It is with such a turn of heart that we hear the good news of Jesus:
“Then you will see clearly...”

3. Let us see people in a clearly helpful way

“Then you will see clearly to remove the other’s speck” (7:5b, 6).

Now that I have removed the beam from my own eye, hopefully, I’m in a position to move from the negative Golden Rule to the positive one: *“Do to others what you would have them do to you” (v12).*

3

“then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye” (7:5b)

a. **Speck removers.** Jesus did not say, *“Don’t remove the speck from your fellow’s eye”*. He said, ***“Then you will see clearly to remove [it]”***. Here is the hope that Heaven may show how specks may be removed.

Hopefully, we have moved from justifying ourselves by condemning others, to repenting of ourselves and helping others.

This selfless love towards others shares in Christ’s Kingdom work to remove the painful shards and hurtful splinters that have stabbed their spiritual sight. We are hopefully answers to the Lord’s Prayer.

b. How can we do it?

- i. We firstly may pray for the person who is pierced in their spirit, that the Lord will remove it. We can ask, “Father, please show them, or me, or someone, how their wounded heart can be healed so that they see Your love for them and how You reach out to their suffering soul. If He chooses you, fine, but in answer to your prayer He may choose someone else to do the sensitive work;
- ii. Ask first, and do Christ’s healing work only if invited to do so;
- iii. Work kindly with the balm of the Fruit of the Holy Spirit;
- iv. Do Christ’s work by keeping Him the focus, and His Word;

c. **Let us also be discerning.** Jesus warned that not everyone is open to the work of Heaven in their souls. He warns against “dogs” and “pigs” – those who have no responsiveness to Jesus Christ.

Small Group Questions

1. “Don’t judge” and “The church is full of hypocrites” are commonly heard. What is the general tone of the person who uses these sayings?
2. Jesus is speaking to His disciples but He is also addressing the crowd around Him. Is He informing them of things they never knew before, or are they points that they easily recognize in themselves and others?
3. What, in this passage of 7:1-6, is new from Jesus that would challenge and convict His audience – and us?
4. What, in your own words, is Jesus expecting from those who follow Him?
5. If you haven’t already discussed it, what are we to judge, and what are we not to judge?
6. How does Jesus point in 7:1-6 change our relationship with those Jesus is reaching through us?
7. Why does Jesus say, “Don’t give what is sacred to dogs; do not cast your pearls before swine”? What’s the point for today?