

“The World’s Most Popular Bible Verse”, Matthew: The Life and Words of Jesus, Part 21 – Matthew 7:1-6 – Joshua Harris – October 21, 2012

Introduction

1. The statement “judge not that you be not judged” might be one of most quoted, most widely known statements from the Bible – even among people who aren’t Christians. When an unbeliever hears Christians talk about sin or call a behavior wrong or immoral, they think of this verse and want to call us on our inconsistency, pride and hypocrisy.
2. But is that the right use of these verses?

There are wrong ways to apply this passage

1. If a person loves this passage because they use it as an escape hatch from any kind of moral accountability, that’s a wrong reason for liking it. That’s a misapplication of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus is not teaching us that we should suspend all judgment and not evaluate whether something is right or wrong. In Matthew chapters 5 - 6, Jesus clearly teaches that there is right and wrong. So to use these verses to escape moral culpability is a wrong application.
2. Another, misapplication of this passage is to use it to deflect any criticism another person has for us. When we use this passage to point out someone else’s fault, we’re completely missing the entire point of what Jesus is saying. The whole point of what Jesus is teaching is self-evaluation. It’s not a club to attack someone else. It’s not a shield to deflect criticism. It’s a mirror for us to look into our own faults

Only by accepting God’s judgment can we escape being judgmental toward other people (verses 1-2)

1. The issue that Jesus is addressing is a judgmental attitude – a viewpoint that is constantly critical toward others and a heightened awareness of their faults. It’s holding a standard over others that we wouldn’t want held over us. And what Jesus teaches is that the key to escaping this is to remember that we will One Day be judged by God and answer to him.
 - a. *Hebrews 4:13, “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*
 - b. *Hebrews 9:27, “...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”*

Sermon Outline

2. In Matthew 6, Jesus taught us to pray to God as Father. We've learned that our Father in heaven rewards our faithfulness and acts of devotion done in secret for him. But here Jesus shows us that God is also Judge. Is there a contradiction? Pastor Sinclair Ferguson doesn't think there is:

"God is both Father and Judge. The terrible thing for the unbeliever is that he is both; in rejecting God's judgment on his life, the unbeliever also rejects the privilege of having him as his Father; in rejecting God's fatherly grace, the unbeliever encounters him as Judge. For the believer, the knowledge that God is Father transforms his view of him as Judge, and the knowledge that he is Judge fill him with awe that such a God is also his Father." – Sinclair Ferguson

3. Judgmentalism flows from the notion that we are the highest standard. We are above someone else. Having the understanding of God as Judge transforms our view of others. We have a new reference point, a vertical reference point. Life is no longer just about how we stack up to and compare to others on a horizontal level – whether we're better or worse than them. It's about how we are evaluated by God.
 - a. Here's what Jesus is showing us: only by accepting God as your Judge can we escape a judgmental outlook. When we see God as being over our life – even if we are good at something we realize that we are not the standard. We are not perfection. It has come by grace and we are in need grace.
 - b. Jesus says there's a direct connection between how we treat others and how we relate to God. With the measure we use, it will be measured to us. With the way we pronounce judgment, we will be judged by God.

Being judgmental is ludicrous (verses 3-5)

1. In verses 3-5 Jesus gives a specific illustration of the kind of judgmental attitude he's warning against. His main purpose seems to be to show us how foolish, unreasonable and out of place a judgmental outlook is. It's like a person trying to get a piece of sawdust out of his friend's eye when they have a huge 2x4 board sticking out of their own eye. You can't even reach the person because your board keeps smacking them in the head. The picture reveals how foolish it is when we are judgmental toward others and see their faults with no reference to our own.
 - a. Jesus' teaching hints at the fact that often our judgment comes in the form of "helping" other people. We should all examine places where we think other people need our "help": our spouse, our kids, that member of your small group, or your non-Christian friend. Who are you viewing as your own personal "project" right now? Is your desire to help motivated by love or by a sense that you are better than they are?

Sermon Outline

- b. What Jesus is showing us here is that if we really love other people, if we really want to help them, we'll start with a focus on our own shortcomings.

There is a place for discretion (verse 6)

1. In verse 6, Jesus says that not being judgmental doesn't mean you don't exercise wisdom and discretion. Dogs don't appreciate what is holy. Pigs have no use for pearls. If you throw them pearls to try and placate them, they may end up turning and trying to harm you. In some cases there are people who are so angry and "anti-God" that it's unwise to try to engage them with holy things and the pearls of God's wisdom. This isn't about judging people as unworthy or calling them dogs and pigs. It's about a kind of wise discretion that recognizes what is and isn't appropriate in certain settings.
 - a. For example, perhaps you have a friend who is belligerent when it comes to matters of faith. Whenever you are with others he wants to argue, mock your faith and rant against the Bible. God wants you to love him, pray for him and where appropriate patiently share the gospel with him. But wisdom might be to avoid confrontation when you know he's not really interested in truth or understanding who God is. Again, this isn't an attitude of judgment or superiority. Instead, Jesus is calling us to the discernment to match the truth we share with the proper occasion and audience.

Conclusion

1. This passage can be summed up by saying that truly knowing God and truly caring for others expresses itself in a greater awareness of our faults than the faults of others. But there's something even more essential for us to remember. As with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus isn't merely calling us to better living, to be nicer, less judgmental people. Jesus is calling us to himself.
2. He calls us to repent and to turn with faith to him. Jesus is not just a skilled teacher or a man of wisdom. He is the Son of God who came into the world to save us from our sins. Remember who is telling us to stop being judgmental. He is the perfect Son of God who was judged for us on the cross.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Matthew 7:1-6
2. Have you ever misapplied these verses – either to escape moral responsibility, correction or criticism? Are there other ways you have misapplied these verses?
3. How should a vertical awareness of our accountability to God help us to extend grace instead of judgment to others?

Sermon Outline

4. In what ways are you tempted to sin (or sin) in judging others? What does this reveal about your relationship with the Lord? How can you grow and change?
5. Who are you viewing as your own personal “project” right now? Is your desire to “help” them motivated by love or by a sense that you are better than they are?
6. Why does Jesus teach that love for other people begins with a focus on our own shortcomings?
7. In verse 6, what wisdom and discretion does Jesus call us to?