

## Why Christians Should Love and Not Judge - Part 2

Sermon on September 20, 2020

**Golden verse:** “Do not judge, so that you will not be judged.” Matthew 7:1

**Scripture reading:** Matthew 7:1-5 and Philippians 1:1-11,27

### **Sermon**

Today, following the lectionary, we start to study the letter written by Paul to the Philippians. He says: “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” (Philippians 1:27/a) Parallel, we read the gospel of Matthew, chapter 7, where God is judged by His people because of the way He pays equally all His servants for their labour.

These days, there is almost a worldview that “**Christians are judgmental**”. This sentence hits me in the head like a 2x4. When we hear this sentence, the worse thing we can do is to stay silent or to say: “Yes, I am sorry. They are.”

I don’t agree that ALL Christians are judgmental. I have many Christian friends, sisters and brothers who are NOT. But I know that there are some Christians who are judgmental, and they would like to send people to hell, if they don’t agree with them.

Our responsibility is to defend those Christians who are NOT judgmental, and to help those who are to change.

Here, we continue our topic from last Sunday, when God was teaching us not to judge each other.

It is quite possible that Matthew 7:1, “*Do not judge, so that you will not be judged*”, is one of the most quoted verses in the Bible. Last Sunday, we learned that being judgmental refers to the tendency to form an opinion or conclusion about something too quickly and critically. These judgmental assumptions can be based on a person’s behaviour, morals, actions, or beliefs. We learned that judgment is a hidden boast. The person who is judging is placing him or herself above the other person. Being judgmental means casting stones. The person who is judging puts himself in the judgment-seat and judges others. When we judge, we divide families, groups, and congregations. We create small groups that have different opinions about the situation. In this way, we are the devil’s co-workers who want to divide and destroy us.

Now, let us see: **what is the meaning of exhortation in the Bible?**

Exhortation is an intimate call, face-to-face, to fellow believers not to criticize, but to admonish and to encourage a person with love and kindness.

The Bible says that it is necessary to form an opinion about teachings and thoughts, even about each other if necessary. Paul said that it is important to judge what God’s will is in a certain

situation, what is good and what is wrong. However, we have to see the positive things in each other, things which unite us and not those which divide us.

It is not the same to judge things as true or false, OR to judge a person who is thinking differently or acts differently than the majority.

Let me provide an example. Once, Peter, led by the Holy Spirit, confessed: You are Christ, the Son of the Living God. A few minutes later, when Jesus proclaimed that He has to suffer and die in Jerusalem, Peter wanted to protect Jesus saying: This cannot happen to you! For this Jesus called him Satan, who was tempting Him and was not thinking as God is thinking about Jesus' mission.

Jesus told Peter directly that he was wrong. Jesus did not talk behind Peter's back. Jesus did not gossip with the disciples, debriefing how wrong Peter was and how bad was his way of thinking. With this, Jesus set an example before us.

God does not forbid all kinds of judgment. God encourages us to learn to judge everything, but not to judge one another.

As we seek to live for Christ, we have to see how Jesus Christ treated everyone. He ate dinner with prostitutes and tax collectors. He was willing to heal the sick, the lame, and those with leprosy that were considered outcasts in their time. God has a heart of forgiveness. He has forgiven me and you of our sins as well.

Look at what Jesus said to the Pharisees who brought an adulterous woman before Him after being caught in the act. *"But Jesus stooped down and with His finger began writing in the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw the first stone at her.'* Again He stopped and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, and He was left alone and the woman where she was." (John 8: 6-8)

The Lord Jesus Christ is teaching us not to be a Pharisee, which in the Bible means judgmental, two-faced, judging somebody publicly and secretly doing what they want to do.

Once we make ourselves judge and jury, we are putting us above God and not living as His servants. That is a sin, indeed. If we don't show love like Jesus to everyone, how can we ever hope to bring people to Christ?

### **What does the Bible suggest instead of judgment?**

God has given us clear instructions on how to carry ourselves as His children. The opposite of judgment is respect. When we lose focus and judge those who are different, we deny that we are witnesses for Christ. It is my prayer that we all should think twice before judging someone. May the Holy Spirit remind us if this is how Jesus would treat this person or persons.

God has instructed us to love one another, and not to judge. We have been chosen by God to live as salt and light to the world - not be judge and jury.

We are called by God to *“be holy and beloved, to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.”* Colossians 3:12-15

Let us love without hypocrisy. *“Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honour; ...fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be haughty in mind...do not be wise in your own estimation.”* (Romans 12:9-16)

### **Are we committed to making progress?**

I want to remind us, as Christians, how crucial it is to remember who we are in Christ. It is not our role here on earth to pass judgment, whether in private or publicly. We have a responsibility to bring others to Jesus, not send them rushing away with a perception of us as judgmental Pharisees.

Jesus said: *“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way that you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”* Matthew 7:1-3.

God expects His children to be better. Being judgmental is not part of the Christian life. This is what God encourages us to do: do not judge. Seek something beautiful in everyone and strengthen it.

Jesus wants us to stand firm in our faith - showing the kindness and humility that He exhibited during His time on earth. Let us look closely at how we treat people who live differently. We don't want to give Satan the opportunity to stand before Jesus laughing at how we behave. We are to be shining lights that glorify God and lead people to Christ. That is how Christians are instructed to live. Let us follow our Lord Jesus Christ in everything we say or do. Amen