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Introduction

King David should have been out at the war, leading his troops from the front. But he wasn't, he was back home wandering the walls of his palace when he saw her. She was beautiful, stunning, naked. He looked, he looked again, he sent for this lady and spent the night with her. No one would ever know.... But a couple of months later, she was found to be pregnant, David's sin would soon be evident for all to see.

So what does he do? He arranged a plot to seem like her husband, an officer in his army was the real father. But Uriah, the husband, is too righteous for that. So he sent orders to the front for Uriah to be killed. The mighty King David was now both an adulterer and a murderer. Now that's the well known part of the story. But the Bible writer hasn't yet finished. Because soon after, the prophet Nathan comes to David and cleverly tells him a story, a story about two men, a rich man and a poor man.

The rich man had a guest and he wanted to put on a feast but he didn't want to spare one of his own sheep, even though he had thousands. So he took the poor man's only lamb, an animal that was so dear to him, it was like it was a part of the family. On hearing the story, King David became very angry. This rich man must die! He has done the wrong thing, he needs to pay the ultimate price!

But how does Nathan respond? Does he say to David, "No you shouldn't judge the morals of this man?" No he doesn't, because David has every right to judge! He is the king, he is the leader of God's people, he must make judgements in order to serve God. No, Nathan looks at David and says "You are this man! You have taken what is not rightfully yours."

You see Nathan rebukes his king. But he does something else. He has taught the King the principle that Jesus wants to teach us in the 7th chapter of the gospel of Matthew. That when you are going to judge, you must first take the log out of your own eye, before you take the speck out of someone else's eye.

You see David made the right judgement to Nathan's story, he should stop the rich man from taking the poor man's only animal. The problem was David hadn't yet looked at his own life. David hadn't removed the sin that he was responsible for. David hadn't noticed that in his own eye he had a massive plank, where the rich man just had a splinter.

But before we are too quick to condemn David, isn't that something we need to learn? Why do we hate it when others spread stories about us and yet in the next breathe we tell harmful stories about others? Why do we boil inside when someone makes a harsh judgement about us and yet we then do the same thing with others? Often we find that we concentrate on someone else's sins, or character flaws, or failings and yet we never think about our own. As human beings it seems most of us, are more concerned with the sawdust in our neighbour's eyes than the plank in our own.

And so it is in this context, that we hear Jesus say, *“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.”* Now Jesus is not saying that we shouldn't judge, full stop. Because like David, there is a time to judge. In fact Jesus will say in verse 6 that we shouldn't give pearls to swine, and how do we know if someone is a swine without making a judgement? And a few verses later he will talk about being aware of false prophets. How can we know if someone's is leading us astray without judging them? So its not like Jesus is saying “don't judge“.

But he is saying don't be judgemental. Don't be quick to criticise. Don't habitually find fault with others. Because self righteous judgements will boomerang back to you. Others will judge you by the way you have judged them and God will judge you by the way you have judged others.

The American Indians had a saying, "Don't judge a man until you've walked a mile in his moccasins." The point being that you have to know what they are up against before you condemn another's actions. You have to place yourself in their position to fully understand why they have done certain things. I think it was the comedian Steve Martin, who parodied that saying by pointing out, "Never judge a man unless you've walked a mile in his shoes. Then you'll be a mile away and you'll have his shoes."

In the “Peanuts” comic strip, Linus asks Lucy, “Why are you always so anxious to criticize me?” She answers, “I just think I have a knack for seeing other people's faults.” “What about your own faults?” asks Linus. Her response is, “I have a knack for overlooking them.” Isn't that so true? Bertrand Russell put it this way, "I am firm. You are obstinate. He's pig-headed. I have reconsidered. You have changed your mind. He's gone back on his word."

What's more, Jesus says, when we judge, we need to start by judging ourselves. For it is no use getting the speck out of our brother's eye, if we have a log in our own. It is impossible to get the splinter distorting someone else's sight when we have a piece of 4 by 2 obstructing our own.

You see, when I spend my time pointing my finger at your sin, my attention is distracted from my own sins, and that's the real danger of judging. We're all sinners, and we're got to work together as a family to overcome our sins. But ultimately, the only sins over which I have control are my own, and those are the ones that should command my greatest attention.

But its not like we never point out anyone else's sins at all. What's the loving, Christian thing to do when someone comes to you and he's got a speck in his eye? Turn and walk away? No! Do you say, "Oh, no. I could never take that speck out of your eye. I've had specks in my eye before"? Of course not! He's got something in his eye and he needs it taken out.

Or suppose a child comes to you with a splinter in his finger. He's crying, "Please take this splinter out!" What's the Christian thing to do? Leave the splinter there? No! You take the splinter out! So Jesus was saying there is a place for some discernment in people's lives. If you see brothers or sisters who have specks in their eyes, you

need to help them take it out! But first you take out the four-by-two of self-righteousness out of your own eye.

Now we may all know this is the right way to live, but its hard to do isn't it? I will be quick to condemn someone else's bad driving, but often I fail to recognise my own. I will reel when someone says something to me without thinking, but I don't feel the pain when I do it to someone else. I expect people to cut me some slack but often I don't cut them slack in return.

And yet doesn't our behaviour not just reflect on ourselves but on our God? It was William MacDonald who said, "a habitual fault-finder is a poor advertisement for the Christian faith" And I think he is right. So why does the TV so often depict us Christians as being judgemental, holier than thou, hypocrites. When we should be the exact opposite.

Friends, we are called to judge, but not to be judgemental. To hate the sin, love the sinner. To be involved in constructive criticism, but only when we have had a good hard look at ourselves. And it is when we are growing in godliness, and only then, do we have the right to help others grow in their godliness. So don't be judgemental, but

2. Don't be naive either.

For immediately Jesus gives a balance to his teaching. If we are not to be judgemental, then we are also not to ignore people's faults and pretend everyone is the same. As Spurgeon once said "The saints are not be judgemental but saints are not simpletons either." If we remove the log from our own eye so we can see clearly and then remove the speck from our brother's eye, then if he is a true brother he will appreciate it. But not everyone is grateful toward correction, are they?

Jesus sketches for us a picture of a man holding a bag of precious pearls, confronting a pack of vicious hounds and some wild pigs. While the animals stare at the man, he takes out the pearls. They think they are good for food and gulp them down, but they are tasteless and they soon spit them out and in turn chase after the man.

A few years ago, my parents went on a trip to the United States and while they were there, they did some camping at Yosemite national park. At the national park there are some huge signs which say 'Don't fed the Bears'. And what's more you have to keep all your food in huge metal, bear proof cages, away from the tents. My parents told me that these huge brown bears often stroll around the camping area in search of food. But the most dangerous thing you can do is given them food, because if they aren't satisfied they will come after you. But if they don't smell any food in your packs or on your person, they are usually harmless.

In the same way there are some people who are like wild bears, or using Jesus illustration like wild dogs or pigs, who when you give them pearls, when you give them the most valuable thing you own, the gospel of the Lord Jesus, do nothing but spit it out and abuse and attack you. And if you seek to help your Christian brothers with their sin, even in a gentle and loving way, some will begin to act like wild boars. They will not appreciate it at all. It will in circumstances like this, be better for you to keep quiet.

Don't be naïve in how you deal with others. At times it will be better to say nothing than to keep on giving others constructive criticism. Don't be judgemental or naïve,

but **3. Do Pray.**

Because if we are going to live this way, we are going to need God's help in order to do it. For you won't be able to do this on your own. So *ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you.*

Now taken out of context this seems to say that everything you pray for will be given to you. That all you have to do is get God's undivided attention and he will grant to you whatever you want. Which reminds me of the time that a businessman who needed millions of dollars to clinch an important deal went to Church to pray for the money. By chance he knelt next to a man who was praying for one hundred dollars to pay an urgent debt. The businessman took out his wallet and pressed one hundred dollars into the other man's hand. Overjoyed, the man got up and joyfully left the Church. The businessman then closed his eyes and prayed, "And now, Lord, that I have your undivided attention . . ."

But its not like that at all. If you need wisdom to know whether to stop handing pearls to pigs, then ask for wisdom. If you are seeking to be less judgemental and you are bringing that to God again and again in prayer, you will find the way forward. If you are knock, knock, knocking on heavens door to stop worrying about tomorrow, to reduce your trust in money, so that you love your neighbour and your enemies, so that your lifestyle might be salt and light to those around you, then that door will be opened to you.

This is not about God giving you carte blanche to name it and claim it. Lord give me healing for my cancer. Lord help my loved one to live. Father allow my children to always be safe and secure. No, in the context of the sermon on the mount, this is all about God building a Christian counterculture amongst you and your fellow Christians. Its about God helping you to put God first and his righteousness. It's about God giving you the strength to live the way that he wants you to live.

But even then its not just going to happen. You have to ask God for it to happen. You have acknowledge that you can't do it on your own. That you need to receive this sort of righteousness as a gift. Its not about your works ultimately, its about God's gift, his grace. But its more than just asking, at times you will need to seek. You will need to expend more and more effort. You will have to look for the answers, seek out the best method, ponder the Scriptures. But if you do seek the answers, God says I will help you to find them.

But even then there will issues where you have to do more than just seek, more than ask, you will have to knock and keep knocking. You will have to persevere. You will have to be persistent. You will have to continue to ask, continue to seek, continue to knock on God's door with your needs. It might mean that you are praying for the growth in your Church for a decade. It might mean you are seeking a change in your character for the whole of your working life. It might mean that you are pleading for the conversion of your son for the rest of your life.

For all three verbs in verse seven, Ask, Seek, Knock are not only imperatives, commands but they are present tense imperatives. We are told to ask and keep on asking, we are to seek and keep on seeking and we are to knock and keep on knocking. Because God in the end will give his children good gifts. He will not give us a snake, or a rock when we are hungry. He will give us what is good and right. So keep on praying, for our Father in heaven, loves to give his children good gifts.

But that doesn't mean he will give us everything that we want! It was Bill Hybels that said, If the request is wrong, God says, "No." If the timing is wrong, God says, "Slow."

If you are wrong, God says, "Grow." But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, "Go!" So if you lack the ability to put the sermon on the mount into practise then pray, and keep on praying. And make sure you don't just do it by yourself and for yourself, but earnestly ask, seek, knock for all of us here today.

But as Dr. R.A. Torrey recently pointed out, "We do not live in a praying age. We live in an age of hustle and bustle, of man's efforts and man's determination, of man's confidence in himself and his own power to achieve things, an age of human organization, and human machinery, and human push, and human scheming, and human achievement; which in the things of God means no real achievement at all."

If we want to be different to the religious and to the average Australian we are going to need to humble ourselves and seek God's help, his strength, his ways. So don't be judgemental, don't be naïve, do be prayerful and lastly

4. Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.

In his commentary on Matthew 1-7, John MacArthur, Jr. writes, "Every other form of this basic principle had been given in purely negative terms, and is found in the literature of almost every major religion and philosophical system. The Jewish rabbi Hillel said, "What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else." Confucius taught, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." An ancient Greek king named Nicocles wrote, "Do not do to others the things which make you angry when you experience them at the hands of other people." The Stoics promoted the principle, "What you do not want to be done to you, do not do to anyone else." In every case the emphasis is negative. The principle is an important part of right human relations, but it falls short—far short—of God's perfect standard."

For God's principle is positive, do unto others as you have them do unto you. Its talking about us actually doing something. We have to take the initiative. We need to take the first step. Oh isn't much easier for us to say, if they repent, I will forgive. If they are kind to me I will be kind to them. If they stop talking behind my back, I will stop talking behind theirs. Oh its easier to let someone else make the first move.

But as Christians it is our job to take the initiative. You want to be forgiven? Forgive! You need affirmation? Affirm! You feel hurt, wounded, broken and need a gentle touch? Be gentle with others! You appreciate tact? Be tactful! You enjoy a nice compliment? Compliment others!

The Golden Rule will transform our actions. If we truly apply it, we'd never be mean, always generous, never harsh, always understanding, never cruel, always kind. I'd love to be like that, wouldn't you?

Well that is what Jesus is calling us to do! That is the standard that is impossibly high that we as a Church are trying to live up to. That is one way that you could summarise the whole of the Law and the Prophets, the whole of the OT.

Sound impossible? It is without the grace of God. That is why you need more than just Jesus teaching, you need Jesus death and resurrection. That is why you need more than just to know about the Father, you need to put your trust in the Father. That is why you need more than just the Spirit's illumination, you need the Spirit's power. In order to live the life that Jesus is calling us to live.

But a long journey starts with the first step. And Jesus is calling us today to live by faith and says to us now, this is your next step, take it with me.

Apparently, one day Billy and Ruth Graham were driving through a long stretch of road construction. They had numerous slowdowns, detours, and stops along the way. Finally they reached the end of all that difficulty, and smooth pavement stretched out before them. This sign caught Ruth's attention: "End of construction. Thanks for your patience." She commented that those words would be a fitting inscription on her tombstone someday. "End of construction. Thanks for your patience."

What God is calling us to do will take the rest of our life time. Each one of us are people under construction. So let us continue to ask, seek and knock, that as He works on us, we will truly become different to everyone else, and useable in the service of our wonderful God.

Sermon Central first 49 sermons...

*****a

John Stott put it this way: "Jesus does not tell us to cease to be men (by suspending our critical powers which help to distinguish us from animals) but to renounce the presumptuous ambition to be God (by setting ourselves up as judges)." That's what drives this overly critical attitude: a belief that I can see as God sees. I can see your motives. I can see the way you're thinking. I know all the things that have led you to this point in your life. That's what Jesus wants to eliminate.

*****c

Notice that self-righteous judgment has a boomerang: "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." In other words: "Look, if you start throwing out this critical spirit on other people, it'll come back.

*****d

Not only was it overly critical, but it was also hypocritical.

*****h

We've seen the teachings of Jesus; as we close, let's notice his example. In John 8, Jesus is confronted by a mob pushing before it a woman that was caught in the act of adultery. The mob tried to use her, as if she were a thing, in order to trap Jesus. The Jewish law said she must die. Roman law said that she couldn't be killed without their permission. There was never any doubt about her guilt, nor was there any doubt as to the seriousness of her action.

So what did Jesus do when confronted by this sinner? First, he refused to look down on her. He wouldn't allow the mob to treat her as a thing. Rather he forced the mob to consider their own sin. But, second, he didn't justify her behavior. He wouldn't refer to her action as anything other than sin. He forgave her and challenged her to stop sinning.

*****k

Augustine prayed "O Lord, deliver me from this lust of always vindicating myself."

*****l

During a cold winter, a farmer found a snake stiff and frozen with cold. The snake said to the Farmer, "If you pick me up and hold me to your stomach, your body will make me warm." The Farmer said, "If I do that you will bite me." The Snake answered, "Why would I do that if you save me?"

The Farmer had compassion on the Snake, and taking it up, placed it in his bosom. The Snake was quickly revived by the warmth and resumed its natural instincts, bit its benefactor, inflicting on him a mortal wound.

"Oh," cried the Farmer, "Why did you bite me after I saved you?"

"You knew I was a snake when you picked me up," answered the Snake. With his last breath the farmer said, "I am rightly served for pitying a scoundrel."

Brothers and sisters, if you cozy up to a snake you're liable to get bit!

&&&&&o

In the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of passengers died as they were hurled into the icy waters below. News of the disaster was further darkened when an investigation revealed the cause of the accident. It wasn't a technology problem like radar malfunction--or even thick fog - it wasn't a y2k problem come too early. The cause was human stubbornness. Each captain was aware of the other ship's presence nearby. Both could have steered clear, but according to news reports, neither captain wanted to give way to the other. Each was too proud to yield first. By the time they came to their senses, it was too late.

*****q

Dear Lord,

When I am wrong, make me easy to change;

When I am right, make me easy to live with."

— Peter Marshall

*****t

We are sorry to announce the passing of Mrs. Prayer Meeting. She died recently at the First Neglected Church on Ho-Hum Avenue. Born many years ago in the midst of a great revival, she was strong and healthy as a child, fed largely on testimony and Bible study she grew into world-wide prominence and was one of the most influential members of the Church family.

However, in recent years Sister Prayer Meeting has been failing in health, gradually wasting away until rendered helpless by stiffness of the knees, cooling of the heart, lack of spiritual sensitivity and the concern for spiritual things. Her last whispered words were inquiring about the strange absence of her loved ones, now so busy in the market place and places of worldly amusement on Wednesday evenings!

Experts, including Dr. Good Works, Dr. Socializing and Dr. Unconcerned disagree as to the fatal cause of her final illness. They all administered large doses of excuses, even ordered a last minute motivational bypass, all to no avail. A post-mortem examination showed that a deficiency of regular spiritual food, a lack of prayer and Christian fellowship, all contributed to her untimely demise.

*****v

Be careful if your King James Bible was printed in 1716. That particular year the printer mad a flagrant mistake. In John 5:14, the final copy read "sin on more" rather than "sin no more." That must have been a good year for bible sales, because it seems like a lot of people are still heeding the advice of that old edition.

A businessman wanted to send a floral arrangement to a friend who was opening a new branch office. His friend called later in the day to thank him for the considerate gesture but was a little confused about the accompanying card which read, "Rest in Peace." The businessman apologized for the mix-up and quickly called to chastise the florist. The florist tried to console the executive. He said, "That's nothing. Somewhere in the cemetery there's a bouquet with a note reading. "Good luck in your new location."

*****x

At the turn of 20th century, the world's most distinguished astronomer, Sir Percival Lowell, was certain there were canals on Mars. When he heard, in 1877, that an Italian astronomer had seen straight lines crisscrossing the Martian surface, Lowell spent the rest of his years squinting into the eyepiece of his giant telescope in Arizona,

mapping the channels and canals he saw. He was convinced the canals were proof of intelligent life on the Red Planet—possibly an older but wiser race than humanity. His observations gained wide acceptance and none dared contradict him. Since that time space probes have orbited Mars and landed on its surface. The entire planet has been mapped and not one canal. Today we know that Lowell suffered from a rare eye disease that made him see the blood vessels in his own eyes. The Martian “canals” he saw were nothing more than the bulging veins of his eyeballs, the disease now known as “Lowell’s syndrome.” When Jesus warns that “in the same way you judge others, you will be judged” (Matthew 7:1-3) and talks about seeing “the speck of sawdust” in another’s eye while missing the plank in our own, He is referring to the spiritual equivalent of Lowell’s syndrome! Over and over, we “see” faults in others because we don’t want to believe anything better about them.

*****y

When you throw dirt at people you’re not doing a thing but losing ground. - Zig Ziglar

*****z

It is said that when the British and French were fighting in Canada in the 1750s, Admiral Phipps, commander of the British fleet, was told to anchor outside Quebec.

He was given orders to wait for the British land forces to arrive, then support them when they attacked the city.

Phipps’ navy arrived early. As the admiral waited, he became annoyed by the statues of the saints that adorned the towers of a nearby cathedral, so he commanded his men to shoot at them with the ships’ cannons.

No one knows how many rounds were fired or how many statues were knocked out, but when the land forces arrived and the signal was given to attack, the admiral was of no help. He had used up all his ammunition shooting at the “saints.”

*****1

The dogs and pigs of Jesus’ time were not quite what we think of today. We’re not talking Lassie and Miss Piggy here!

For instance, dogs weren’t the nice, domesticated puppies many of us have at home. In fact, no one kept dogs as pets then. The dogs of Jesus’ day were wild, feeding on garbage and road kill. And this is still the case for most of the dogs in the Middle East.

Dogs and pigs were viewed with contempt and repulsion, especially in the days of the Bible.

*****2

Knock (asking + effort + persistence):

*****3

The history of *science* is littered with *bad decisions*. A scientific establishment that didn’t recognise *truth* when it was staring it in the face. Establishment scholars... who didn’t *see the value* of a *precious idea*.

For example Albert Einstein spent the first part of his life working as a *clerk* in the

Swiss Patents Office. Which is what he was doing when he came up with his famous *theory of relativity*. $E=MC^2$.

When he published his paper in a small scientific journal in 1905, nobody took any notice. Because he was just a patent clerk. After it was published, Einstein applied for a job as a university and was rejected. He applied for a job as a high school teacher and was rejected as well. So he went back to his job as patent examiner third-class. Applied for a promotion to *second class*. And was knocked back for that as well. And it wasn't til 1919... that Albert Einstein was finally appreciated... by the world that had discarded him.

*****4

To which Jesus says if you're going to use the small ice-cream scoop to dish up for everybody else, don't think you'll get the large scoop yourselves.

*****9

He is saying, "Don't pick on people, jumping on their failures and criticizing their faults unless you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging!"(Message Bible Matthew 7:1)

*****10

Once again listen to how Peterson translates this passage:

Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Do you have the nerve to say, 'Let me wash your face for you,' when your own face is distorted by contempt?

*****12

I read about a ship that was engulfed in fog off the coast of Newfoundland. It was Wednesday night. And they were moving very slowly.

The Rev. George Mueller went up to the bridge and said, "Captain, I have to be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon."

The captain said, "Pastor, that's impossible. We're not going to make it."

Then Mueller said, "Let's go down to the chart room and pray to God."

The captain said, "Are you crazy? I can't go to the chart room right now! Do you have any idea how dense the fog is?"

And Mueller said, "No. My eye is not on the density of the fog. But on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life." Once they got to the chart room, Mueller got down on his knees and prayed "Lord, you're the one who made the arrangements for me to preach the gospel in Quebec. I really believe with all my heart that you want me to be there on time. If it is consistent with your will, please remove this fog in five minutes. In Jesus' name, Amen."

They went back upstairs to the bridge. And within a matter of minutes, the fog lifted! It was a miracle!

How cool would it be if you could pray like that? How would you like to be able to

get results like that?

*****13

St. Augustine said, "God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full - there's nowhere for Him to put it."

*****14

Last year, a movie was released called "Pay It Forward." How many of you have seen it?

A couple of months ago, I finally took Greg Boldt's advice and rented it. An evening well spent.

In the movie, a boy, played by Haley Joel Osment has a social studies assignment to find a way to change the world. His idea - Do something good for someone that they can't do for themselves, then that person pays it forward.

As it catches on we see people engaging in acts of kindness to others only to say, "Don't pay me back - I'm looking for nothing in return - pay it forward. Find three other people and do something for them."

Essentially, the heart of "Pay It Forward" is the Golden Rule. It's something Jesus thought of 2000 years ago, and if taken seriously, it can still change the world today. Jesus doesn't suggest we limit our actions to just to three people - but to adopt it as a way of treating everyone we meet.