

Small Groups @ TBC - Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: 7 August 2016

Speaker: Mike Levy

Title: The Sermon on the Mount (16) – Kingdom perspective

Read: Matthew 7 verses 1 to 6

Review:

There is a phrase in modern culture “Don’t judge me” – maybe people say it because they know they are in the wrong anyway, maybe they say it because they feel they can do what they want when they want with whom they want and all is fine, maybe it is a threat ... don’t start on me because I have a lot of stuff on you. When Jesus said “Do not judge” what did he really mean?

The word translated here as “Judge” is “Kriuo” and is used in the Bible in four contexts: (1) Lawsuits (2) Governmental direction (3) final damnation by God and (4) Moral discernment (right from wrong, good from bad). Jesus is not saying “stop making all judgements” – see verses 6, 15&16 and 21 of Matthew 7. Jesus encourages us to make moral discernments.

What he is criticizing is the personal condemnation and character assassination that the Pharisees were into. They were hypocritical, self-righteous and arrogant. Their motive was to find fault and condemn. They had a critical spirit. They delighted in finding fault with others, there was no hint at helping, correcting or loving it was about grinding people into the dust, showing they were wrong. And what’s more they adopted double-standards.

In referring to a plank in our own eye Jesus was using hyperbole to make a point, but maybe we all have a tendency to underestimate our own faults and exaggerate those of others. Have you ever tried to remove something from someone else’s eye, or had someone take something from yours? The eye is precious, sensitive and delicate, and removing anything from an eye requires a delicate touch. In the same way we need to be loving, careful and gracious when we address a speck of dust in someone else’s eye. We also need to remember that in the things that really matter we are no better than anyone else: We are all tainted by sinfulness, we are all guilty and need God’s forgiveness, we all need grace, we are all loved by the Father.

So how do we live it out, consider these two types of judgement:

Condemning vs Discerning
Quick vs Careful
Focused on the faults of others vs examining self
Generalizations vs Individual
Gossip, assumptions, appearances vs Benefit of the doubt, observations, questions
Legalistic vs Gracious
Motives vs Actions

Read: John 7 vs 53 to 8 vs 11 – how does this passage look as an example of how to live out the principles that Jesus is setting out in Mathew 7? I wonder what Jesus wrote in the sand?

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Then we come to verse 6, at the time of Jesus dogs were not pets, they were wild savage animals who hunted in packs and pigs were unclean and Jesus says know who are the dogs and pigs and what you put before them. It seems that Jesus is swinging between extremes, on the one hand he is warning his disciples not to judge like the Pharisees judge but then he is saying don't be gullible and naïve, there are some judgments you have to make.

Jesus seems to describe a path between the two extremes, the key thing for each of us is to find that path and walk it, and that comes from experience of life with Jesus.

Reflect and Respond:

1. Share your experiences of when you feel you have been subjected to judgement of the type handed out by the Pharisees. What was its impact on you?
2. What is the plank in your eye and how might it be removed?
3. One problem in making judgements is we often get them wrong – look at 1 Samuel 16 verse 7 – share examples from your life.
4. When have you illegitimately judged another Christian, is there a specific non-essential issue that I am prone to judge, why is it such an issue for me, how can I balance my position on this matter?
5. Look at the table above and work through it, share examples of where you tend to make the wrong type of judgements and discuss how you can make the right kind of judgements, for example where can you be more gracious and less legalistic?
6. Compare John 7 vs 53 to 8 vs 11 with the table above.
7. Share stories of where you have shared your faith with others who Jesus would describe as dogs or pigs. When it comes to sharing faith when is enough, enough? What are the telltale signs that I can recognize in future?