

Sermon 23/9/2018 **Matthew 7:1-12**

It is so easy to criticise people who are political leaders

Especially in this day and age when the news media are sensationalising everything

But let me ask a few questions:

Are you praying for these people?

Do you need to ask God to forgive you for something you might have said?

It is ok to disagree and criticise – but not ok to condemn, or show disrespect

Do you judge your work colleagues or boss? Do you gossip or slander?

How do you feel about:

Sports teams you watch?

Criminals in the news?

Celebrities?

Reality tv contestants?

People you know?

Your family members?

Your extended family members?

Others at church?

The leaders of your church?

People at your place of study?

**Matthew 7:1** *“Judge not, that you be not judged.*

*7:2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.*

*7:3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*

*7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye?*

*7:5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

Does the passage mean we should never Judge; never use critical thinking

Does it mean “stop thinking?”

Well of course not- it actually forces us to think

However it does force us to analyse how we think.

Krma [origin of word crime] = the word that makes the judgment in our passage to day so bad.

Paraphrase might say don't judge others as if they were criminals, for the way you judge them is the same way you will be judged.

**Hypocrites**

Hypo mean under hyper mean over a hypercritical person is critiquing everyone [I will talk about this later in the sermon] but for now a hypocrite

In some cases the hypocrisy is a person with a social justice conscience who refuses to hear an alternative view or see the consequences of the actions they have taken they have justified as being good.

I am sure you can think of other examples lately of hypocrisy: for example a person who claims to believe in free speech who is happy to silence a different opinion, because they think they are better at processing information than the general population.

A hypocrite can just as easily be a very silent person they don't have to be outspoken.

These people under judge if you like. They still judge, but they simply do not put themselves under the high standard that they have for others, Jesus is asking his followers to self-reflect on their standards- not simply impose their standards onto others without considering what they meant for themselves.

**Major point: within the western Church** Consumer Christianity is the cause and sustenance of Hypocrites. We may rightly criticise the way things are done, but never fight to change them or seek to understand why they are done that way.

Hypocrisy and laziness are brothers.

It is a desperate time for churches in NZ; in which we need more commitment than ever from all of our congregation members. Remember you do not go to church to be fed: You are the church. If you don't like the church you are part of then it is partly your responsibility. Please note this is absolutely not an excuse to condemn people who leave churches, but I hope it is God challenging us all to step up and take some responsibility to be the church in Musselburgh that God has called us to be. This is what our prayer weekend was all about.

**Luke 6:37** *"Judge not, and you will not be judged; **condemn not**, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;*

*6:38 give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."*

*6:39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"*

*"Frodo: 'It's a pity Bilbo didn't kill Gollum when he had the chance.'*

*Gandalf: 'Pity? It's a pity that stayed Bilbo's hand. Many that live deserve death. Some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them, Frodo? Do not be too eager to deal out death in judgment. Even the very wise cannot see all ends.*

*My heart tells me that Gollum has some part to play in it, for good or evil, before this is over. The pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many.'*

**— J.R.R. Tolkien**

Now just so it is clear [God alone is allowed to condemn] so we have no right to condemn anyone  
*Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.*

*12:17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all.*

*12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

**12:19** *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."*

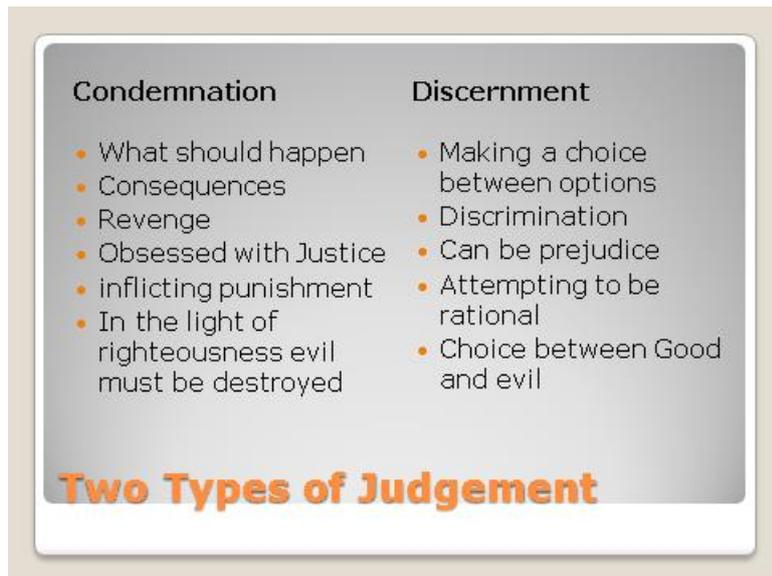
*12:20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."*

*12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Kindness and Love will change the world and bring more suffering upon those who are wicked than any vengeance will.

Remember our true enemy is not; other humans in this world. Our true enemies are: The world [ideas that raise themselves up against God, the flesh [internal corruption that makes us go astray] and the Devil [the ancient evil spiritual beings who hate both God and those God loves]

We lose when we condemn and attack one another over differing personality, style and/or points of view.



God put man in the garden and the man was free from being judged or making judgment  
 After man ate from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil the judgment (Condemnation) fell upon man and Man had to choose between Good and evil [discrimination]

### **Condemnation**

#### **Is God's and God's alone**

Our forefathers took this so seriously that our justice system has been set up to prevent any one person condemning anyone else. We have a jury of 12 neutral people who listen to two equally qualified lawyers debate under the guidance of an impartial judge to confirm guilt or innocence of any person charged with a crime.

### **Discernment**

The correct word is discrimination- but discrimination gets a bad rap as today it generally is associated with Racism or sexism, however it would be fair to say that we rely on this type of judgment all the time to get through our lives.

Racism and Sexism are examples of Bad discrimination. We may not all be racist or sexist as some believe; but we are all certainly guilty of bad discrimination [the correct word for this is Prejudice]. However If we did not judge this way we would have to reach into the closet with our eyes closed and pick our clothes,

We would not have job interviews but pick the names of the applicants out of a hat.

**Hebrews 5:14** *But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

Jesus warns us that when we use this judgment we must do so fairly

If we do misuse our power or show bias or prejudice then God will Judge us in the same way.

This does not mean we are not allowed to have a favourite food; but when our discrimination affects other humans unfairly or unjustly [no matter what the reason] we have to be prepared to make amends.

In Jesus time this may have related to Jewish attitudes to Samaritans and Gentiles or tax collectors and religious leader extorting money from the people. In our day it can relate to preferential treatment of males or females.

Employing people to make up a quota at work rather than employing the best person for the Job. Or racial stereo types either in favour of or against people from certain cultures.

Again this is not to say that occasionally we have to help specific people from specific genders or cultures that have been disadvantaged in the past; but we must not let the pendulum swing too far the other way in the meanwhile. For example there is some acknowledgement that we have created

an education system that produces better results for girls than boys. It has come about because we were seeking to correct injustices done in the past toward females in education, however we must be careful just not to create a problem for boys.

Two wrongs don't make it right.

*Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.*

**C S Lewis**

Sugar tax - may be a good idea [if you think that everyone is a baby] – but we have to allow people to grow.

It is ironic that marijuana may yet be decriminalised and yet sugar may be banned

It is ironic that violent criminals and thieves may receive shorter sentences, while dropping plastic wrap may incur stiffer fines.

Why do we not cultivate a society where we encourage one another to do the right thing rather than punish people for making mistakes?

Constantly families trying to make ends meet and pay expensive grocery bills are worried that wealthy influential doctors and nutritionist are going to force the government to put higher taxes on the only foods that they can afford. A sugar tax sound like a great idea when you are earning over 100,000 dollars a year and trying to stop poorer people buying candy, but why can't healthy food be made cheaper. People can buy a whole bag of potato chips for the same price as one banana or one orange. When you are trying to feed kids on a low income you don't want to hear some highly paid professional tell you the chips are going to be put up in price. Make the fruit cheaper [incentivise healthy choices and stop punishing bad choices].

Matthew 7:6 "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Are you hypercritical?

**Jesus advocates Discernment**

Dogs and swine were allusions to Gentiles and specifically people who did not believe in God, and pearls were allusions to valuable knowledge gained through painful experience [the pearl being thought to have caused some discomfort to the clam].

Jesus is not speaking racially here but rather saying that some people who are outside of God's people will scorn anything that you attempt to share with them about God that you have learned.

We have to be careful, when we speak the truth that we are not stirring up a hornets nest

In saying that sometimes we have to stir the hornets' nest and it is pretty obvious that Jesus did not take his own advice, in the sense that he was killed by wicked men for bringing truth to the world.

Perhaps a better thought is to count the cost before you open your mouth.

Speaking the truth will often cause trouble, but our focus should be speaking the truth; not causing trouble.

This leads to the question of what we do with truth when we know it in a world that denies it.

It is very easy to cross the line of warning people of the consequences of their actions and being too critical.

All too often in my experience a contest of ideas becomes too personal and the desire to share the truth with someone we care about leads to a what can feel like condemnation of a person and then both parties can say very nasty thing and make accusations about each other. No group of people is immune to this behaviour. Sadly very few people apologise for the hurt they cause during these conversations, as they think that they are defending the righteous position. Often the side that is right can be mean with it.

On other occasions people can be so afraid of sharing their thoughts [because they think that they will be criticised harshly] that they end up sneaking around and spreading their ideas in sneaky ways or gossiping. Often testing how people will react before sharing the full truth. This dishonesty is often caused by someone who has been exposed to harsh hypercriticism in the past.

The best way to avoid being hypercritical [if you are ever guilty of it] is to ask yourself, does what I want to say really matter?

Sometimes even really important criticism needs to wait until an opportune moment.

For example:

Playing on the road is a bad idea [is a criticism that cannot wait]

Warning people about sin affecting their life [is a criticism that has to be well timed]

Criticism of specific aspects of the way the church service is run [needs to be done with patience and only if you are volunteering to help]

### **Personal example**

Some truth has taken years for me to learn, I should not therefore expect people to accept it immediately.

Some people are smug in the knowledge that they are right and you are wrong-even though you know that they are wrong- don't get angry just tell them your ideas and let them be that way if they want too, show them love and try and they may listen to you.

The truth will always win. God will reveal it and we will know how close we were to the truth in the end. I don't have a monopoly on truth and neither do you.

Finally sometimes discretion is preferable to truth; if you know the truth about a person that they are trying to hide. Then be very careful about whether or not you expose it. Some situations need to be exposed immediately if a persons' safety is on the line. Some situations call for a friendly chat, others call for our gracious prayers alone.

If you are struggling with a secret you need to know you can trust people before you share your life with them.

We have to create an environment of love and trust, sometimes this is the prerequisite for truth.

The old cliché is true:

“People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care”

Not believing in God may be foolish, but calling people fools is not a way to make connections with them.

Matthew 7:7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.  
7:8 For, and to the one who knocks it will be opened, everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds  
7:9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?  
7:10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?  
7:11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

**How to find the right path**

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

### Truth in God's Word; Motives

Jas\_4:3 Ye ask,<sup>G154</sup> and<sup>G2532</sup> receive<sup>G2983</sup> not,<sup>G3756</sup> because<sup>G1360</sup> ye ask<sup>G154</sup> amiss,<sup>G2560</sup> that<sup>G2443</sup> ye may consume<sup>G1159</sup> it upon<sup>G1722</sup> your<sup>G5216</sup> lusts.<sup>G2237</sup>

James implies that when our will is out of alignment with the will of God he does not answer our prayers as we are motivated by selfish desire rather than humility.

Here is the biggest problem we face as a church today;

**Warning people about sin and its consequences is not the same thing as Judging or Condemning people**

The bible is clear that we must warn people of the possible consequences of poor choices

*Eze 33:2 "Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman,*

*Eze 33:3 and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people,*

*Eze 33:4 then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.*

*Eze 33:5 He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life.*

**Eze 33:6** *But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.*

*Eze 33:7 "So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.*

*Eze 33:8 If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.*

*Eze 33:9 But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.*

The silence of the church on the issue of human morality has led to the need for others to speak up in our place.

Once upon a time we were the social institution that helped the needy, the poor and the addict. And we even spoke warnings that prevented people from taking paths that led to mistakes. We had the answer to the question of Death and suffering and now not even our own members know the basic truths that help us live and die in God honouring ways.

A mother does not condemn a child by warning him that he should not play on the road or he might get run over.

In the same way; an evangelist does not condemn a lost soul by warning him of the perils of condemnation, hellfire and sin.

Sex outside marriage is wrong- not my opinion or even idea- Jesus even went further adultery is committed in the heart

What about money- who does it belong too, do you declare your tax? Do you hide money from the government? Do you give money to help the needy?

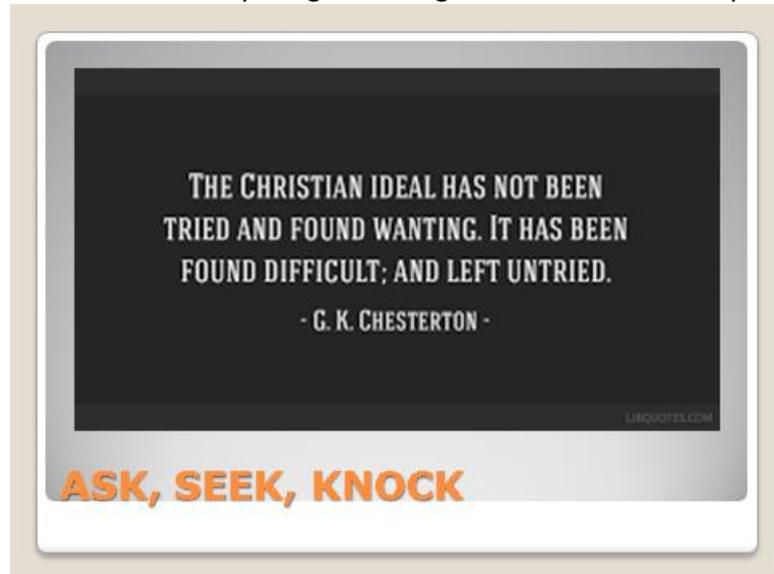
Both money and sex can lead to sin if we don't use holy judgment in our thoughts toward them

Now please don't let my illustration distract you from the main point

We have to ask ourselves are we going to live by our own judgements and decisions or are we going to seek what God wants and his ways

The verse is very clear; what we think and our opinion is irrelevant to God; how much we sought God in our lives is the key to Christianity

There are many people who think that they have lived a good life, but a good life by human standards is actually not good enough. We must lead a Godly life.



*Frodo: 'I wish the Ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.'*

*Gandalf: 'So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. There are other forces at work in this world, Frodo, besides that of evil. Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, in which case you were also meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought.'*

— **J.R.R. Tolkien**

*Matthew 7:12*

*So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

The passage starts by saying how you judge others is the way God will judge you

It ends by saying you are to treat others the way that you would do to them.

In summary:

Do not condemn people- warn them of the dangers lovingly

Try not to make decisions selfishly – but put others first

Seek God and his ways for guidance and resources