



Christianity in Real Life-Part 8

Godly Perspectives in a Godless World

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I don't think this will come as a surprise to most of you, but our world is messed up. Countries are messed up, our government's messed up, the media is messed up, our culture is just—it's just messed up. And I guess if we're gonna scrutinize, you know, get real nitpicky about it—your church is messed up. Your small group is messed up. If we're gonna go that far, I guess you could say your husband's pretty messed up. Your wife's messed up. Your kids are messed up. Their school is messed up. Their sports teams are messed up. I mean, I could go on. You get my point, though. Everything's messed up down here.

Now, the hope of the Christian life—and the good news of the Christian life—is that we recognize there's a time that is coming that has been promised by the Maker, where the kingdom of the world that's so messed up will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever, and all the stuff that's messed up will not be messed up anymore. I didn't even mention how messed up your body is, for instance. And the Bible says one day our bodies will be redeemed—the redemption of the body. The government will then rest on the shoulders of Christ, the crooked things made straight, the rough places plain—it is going to be straightened out. That is the hope of the Bible and the Christian life. And by hope, I mean that's the thing that we are confident about and we look forward to. And that's comforting, it's exciting, it's motivating. It's great.

But for now, the Bible is so clear that there's so much in this world that, for godly people, it's going to be upsetting. It's going to be annoying. It's going to get us angry. It's going to frustrate us. Now, I said that that's something that's going to happen to godly people and Christians, but you know that even happened to Christ. If you really study the Gospels, you'll see that he was often annoyed and angry and upset and frustrated. He felt all of those emotions and expressed them all. And we can go to chapter and verse and see that.

But here's the thing about Jesus Christ: with all of that going on in this messed up world that he did his ministry in, he never allowed all of those annoying things to degenerate his attitude or his character or his spirit—to become bitter, angry, resentful, hypercritical. He was not that. Now, remember, Christ never compromised the valuations of heaven. He looked at the world—he could see it against the backdrop of the ultimate benchmark. He never compromised the word; he never compromised the truth. And yet, he looked at the world with plenty to irk him, and it did—it annoyed him and got him angry. And there are episodes of that in the Gospels. But he never became that bitter, resentful, angry personality.



That's not easy to do. That's a bit of a balancing act that is hard. If you're really going to maintain God's standards and His perspective and grow in godliness in an ungodly world, we need the perspective of Christ that he had, and thankfully he shared it in the Sermon on the Plain in Luke chapter 6. Now, I'd like to talk to you this morning about how to get that attitude and maintain it. I'd like to do that, but I can't. And I can't—at least not right away—because when he shares how to do that, he enlists some words that have been so misquoted, ripped out of context. It's been twisted and abused probably more than any other passage of Scripture. And because of that misapplication and twisting of Scripture, I can't even get to the point of what Jesus was trying to say unless we spend a lot of time trying to correct our minds in terms of the conditioning we've had by our culture—not only outside of the church, but increasingly within the church—as these words are lifted off the page and used in all the wrong ways.

So, like we've already had to do on the Sermon on the Plain, we need to take some time to make clear what he is not saying. So if you haven't already turned there, I want you to see why we've got to spend half of our sermon dealing with this issue. Take a look at it with me—Luke chapter 6. It's printed on your worksheet if you just want to follow along there. Luke chapter 6, verses 37 and 38. Here are the first two words—ready? You see them there: Judge not.

Wow. Okay. I can't even go any further. "Judge not"—that we hear. Oh, if there's one verse the non-Christians like, it's the first part of this verse: "Judge not." I can't even get past that without saying, "Well, wait a minute." Before we ever get to the intention of Christ and let the context help govern that, we've got to deal with that. So let's put that down on our worksheet. This may feel more like a Compass Night on a Thursday night than a Sunday morning sermon. But we have to, number one, understand the Bible on judging.

What does the Bible say? What's the breadth of God's Word say? Because if I just have this verse, and particularly if I watch the way the world likes to apply this verse, I'm gonna miss all of what God has to say on this topic. So I need the broadest possible picture to understand what this word means in this context. Because here's the thing: the word "judge" in the Bible is such a broadly used word—it can be seen as positive and negative depending on the context.

It's kind of like our English word "love." That word, we know in English, is so broadly used that you had better know the context before you comment on what someone means by that word. For instance, we talk on the patio after the service. I come up to you with a concerned look on my face. I say to you, "You know, I've been talking to your neighbors in your neighborhood, on your cul-de-sac, on your street. I've talked to several of them, and I'm quite concerned. I need to talk to you. I need to ask you a question."

"Oh, Pastor, okay. Well, what is it?"



I say, "I just need to know how you answer, honestly. Okay. Do you love your neighbor's wife? You just need to be honest. Tell me."

Now, if you had that question, you need context. Because the right answer may be yes, and the right answer may be no. If you're innocent, I may be asking because of what I've heard from your neighbors—that you love—I mean, "love"—your neighbor's wife. Then you want to say, "No, Pastor Mike, I turn on my neighbor's wife." But it may be that I've been in your neighborhood, and all they say is, "You're so rude to your neighbor's wife. Why so mean to her—rude, critical—why are you?" "Do you love your neighbor's wife?" Then the right answer would be, "Pastor Mike, I do, I do. I don't know—don't misunderstand me—but I love my neighbor's wife."

Do you see that the context is everything? You need to know what I have in my mind when I asked you the question, because the virtuous answer may be, "No, I don't—swear I don't," or, "Yes, of course I do," because we need to know what you mean by love. Because love can go over here, and it can mean things that I better not be doing with my neighbor's wife. Or it can go over here, and if I didn't do that, I'd be in sin. So "love," depending on the breadth of the word—like it is in English—can be something prohibited, and it can be something encouraged, you see that? "Judging" is the exact same way.

Now, I know some preachers get up and talk about Greek like it solves all the problems. And in the New Testament, obviously written originally in *Koine* Greek, and all of us seminarians—we have to go to school, we have to study it for years and take tests and be able to break all the paradigms down and master this language. And I get that. And it's important because that's the language God gave us the New Testament. But it doesn't solve all the problems, particularly when it comes to a word like "cremino," which translates the word "judge" in the New Testament. It occurs some 114 times in the New Testament. And when you read that word, just because it's in Greek, we can't tell—depending on the context—then we can say, "Well, what do you mean?" Because sometimes judging is something you do—and you're supposed to do. And sometimes it's something you don't do. It depends on what kind of judging you're talking about.

So, to spend some time this morning stepping back and saying, "Well, first, let's just look at the 114 times this word is used." Now you're getting ready for a five-hour sermon. We're not gonna look at all 114. But let me just talk you through some of the breadth of the usage of the word "Casino" in the New Testament. So you've already written down number one: we need to understand the Bible on this word, "casino"—judging.



So let's start with letter A. Let's start with the ultimate use of the word "judging" in terms of—letter A—God's ultimate judgments. Now you go, "Okay, there's a category I'm familiar with—that God is one day going to judge the world—judge." Now, the ultimate judging of God—want to give this a definition? We can define it this way: it is the definitive assessment of people's lives and God's reaction to it—the definitive assessment of how people live their lives and then His reaction to it.

Now let's put a qualifier before the word "reaction" in two distinct ways, because there are two ultimate judgments of God: there's the judgment for the lost, and there's the judgment for the saved. There's a judgment for non-Christians, and there's a judgment for Christians. And if you're going to finish that sentence and say it properly—if we're talking about non-Christians—we're going to say it is God's definitive assessment on their lives and His just response to their sins. Okay? That's what we call—you can jot this reference down—Revelation chapter 20. It's called—it's what we call it because this is what it's called in the Bible—the Great White Throne Judgment. You've heard of that—the Great White Throne Judgment.

There are books—three of them at least—discussed there. The books are opened. The first book of interest to us in Revelation 20 that's opened at the Great White Throne Judgment is the Book of Life. If your name is not found in the Book of Life, then you're in the right line—this judgment is for you. That means you are not a Christian; you have not trusted in Christ; you've rejected the claims of Christ; you tried to make it on your own; you're not interested in Jesus. So this line you're in—it's the right line. And then it says there's some more books that are opened. And as the rest of the Bible makes clear, and Jesus made clear, it's the writings of Moses, the statements of Jesus, the apostles recorded—those will judge you on Judgment Day, Jesus said to non-Christians.

So we know the books that are opened, besides the Book of Life to see if you're in the right line, is the book that is the standard of how people should live, going all the way back to Moses in 1445 BC—speaking of your neighbor's wife: don't covet her. That's a more specific word. Don't lie, don't cheat, don't steal, no murder, obey your parents—all of that is in the Bible. And did you live that way? And apparently that's the other books that are opened, as Psalm 139 says, all the things in my life—they're written in the book, the book of my deeds, if you will. I don't want to overdramatize the books. But here's the idea: Are you in the Book of Life? No? Great. Then you go to the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of time. You stand before God, and the standard of behavior is opened, if you will—the benchmark of how you should have lived—and now how you did live, and you will be judged—here's how it says—according to your deeds. It is the ultimate assessment of your life on planet Earth. And it is God's just reaction to it. Because you didn't trust in Christ. You could have trusted in Christ, and you could have had the justice of God satisfied on the cross, but you didn't. So you're in the right line. And now God is going to have the definitive assessment of your life and respond with just recompense. That's how the book of Revelation ends, by the way—Revelation 22—"I'm coming, I'm coming quickly, and my recompense is with me." My repayment is with me. And he's going to judge non-Christians at the Great White Throne Judgment.



Under the category of God's ultimate judgments, the other one is the judgment of Christians, which a lot of Christians—I can't believe—have been in church all their lives and never really heard about. It's the evaluation—let's call it this—the definitive assessment of the Christian's life. And it is God's gracious response not to their sin but to their righteous deeds. Now that doesn't fit in some people's minds, but it's all over the Bible. It is God's response. Matter of fact, let me give you some passages.

First Corinthians chapter 3—smile at me if you remember this analogy—Paul says it's like your life consists of wood, hay, and straw, and gold, silver, and precious stones. Those are the things that you did. As a Christian, you stand before Christ one day, and your life has a definitive assessment. And we separate in your life the wood, hay, and straw from the gold, silver, and precious stones. And the wood, hay, and straw—gone, burned up. You go to the lake of fire? No. It's just not a part of the equation now. God's gracious response to you is rewarding the gold, silver, precious stones. And that's kind of a sad day for some because they don't have much of that. And the Bible says you'll suffer loss—you'll look at all the missed opportunities to live for Christ. First Corinthians chapter 3.

In the next chapter, First Corinthians chapter 4, Paul starts out talking about his own ministry, and he describes it this way: that we'll stand before Christ, and we will be evaluated even down to the place of our motives, and we will then receive our commendation from God—not condemnation, but commendation. God will then praise us and reward us for our lives as Christians. Our sin has been nailed to the cross, not a part of the equation. But now, how did you live? There will be an accounting. And he uses those terms.

Let's keep talking about Corinthians. Second Corinthians chapter 5—Paul puts it this way. This is where we get the word for it that we like to toss around in Bible circles, and that is, he says, "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." The Greek word there is "bema seat." And you've heard that before. If you want to separate the two ultimate judgments of God, think Great White Throne Judgment, and think Bema Seat Judgment. The bema seat—all "bema" means in Greek is an elevated platform—the elevated platform on which Christ sits. You will be called before, and you will give an account for your life. And in that account, God will respond after that definitive assessment of your life. And He will respond graciously, in multiplying interest, to the good deeds that you've done. And depending on what you've done, you will be rewarded.

You want more than that? Romans 14—Romans 14—and all the bickering going on there: stop it. Because one day we're all going to stand before God and give an account of our lives.

You want more on this? This is a category—Christ's teaching on stewards. Whenever he talks about the master and the servants in his parables, watch those parables—they seem to always end with "and the steward is called before the master to give an account of his stewardship." He's always



making us think, “Okay, one day after living for Christ, I’m going to be evaluated—a definitive assessment of my life. And the good will now be rewarded in varying degrees based on what you did.” Salvation based on the fact that your name is found in the Book of Life and all your sin was nailed to the cross. So you want to be in this—in the second one, at least in terms of what we’ve—the chronology of how we’ve spelled it out, not in the chronology in time—but the second one we’ve talked about: you want to be at the bema seat of Christ. All of us will be judged. Do you want to be judged at the Great White Throne? No. I want to be judged at the bema seat. Well, sometimes I’m uncomfortable with that thought, too. But those are my only two choices. And that’s the first category of judgment.

If you want to separate that in your mind and say, “Well, why didn’t God just pick different words for it?” We didn’t in the English language. Your cousin Vinnie—who’s a criminal and a drug dealer—I’m just making this up; I don’t know why I use the word Vinnie, but whatever—he gets busted for his crack sales that he’s doing, and he gets dragged to the courthouse in Orange County, and he stands before the judge, and he passes judgment on him. What is that all about? A definitive assessment—at least as best they can do, and not quite definitive with a capital D—but an assessment of the crimes and a response, hopefully, by a judge to mete out penalties in response to his bad deeds. That’s judgment, and that is a judge.

And we use the same word when we’re not talking about punishment. When you go to the Orange County Fair, and the kid’s there with his pig—I don’t know what—this isn’t work in Orange County. If you lived in Montana—let me just say—and you were part of the 4-H Club or whatever, you were going to bring whatever it is—let’s just say it’s salsa instead. That’s more Orange County—chili cook-off. You’re going to bring your chili—your best salsa—before the judge, and you’re going to be judged. Now, when you send junior to get judged for his pig, or his pumpkin, or his salsa, you don’t think he’s going to be sent to the penitentiary because he didn’t cook good salsa. Cook it? You cook it? I don’t know—prepare it. “This pig is not all that great.” So are you afraid he’s gonna go to punishment? No. All we’re thinking is he’s going to be rewarded according to his work. And it may be, you know, he brings home a trophy and a scholarship to salsa school or whatever, or they just go, “Oh, nice try.” But there’s going to be an evaluation. And you know what you call the guy who walks down the line and tests all the salsa? A judge. And what just happened is salsa was judged.

We use that word broadly enough to encompass both. And so it is in the Bible. Category one: the ultimate judgments of God—two kinds: for punishment, for reward—non-Christians, Christians. Got it? Got it. “I had that when I came in the church.” Great.

Letter B. There’s another kind of judgment discussed throughout the Bible. And it’s the judgment that we are required to make—let’s put it this way, letter B: judgments you need to make, that you’re expected to make, that you’re commanded to make. You are supposed to make judgments all



the time. And the Bible tells us that we should and we must. Now, it's always telling us to do this properly, but it is telling us to do it.

I'll give you one passage just that may be helpful for you: John 7:24—John 7:24. Jesus says, "Don't judge by mere appearances, but judge with a righteous judgment." Judge properly. He's always against judging poorly and wrongly, but he wants us to judge properly. And that may sound like, "Wow, I don't want to be a judge at all." You're a judge all the time. You judge things all the time.

As a matter of fact, for those of you that like languages, this may help—which maybe none of you—but I'm just gonna say it anyway. I kind of like languages, and here you have the word "Kirino" that translates "judge." It is the core root word that we see as the core of all kinds of what we call cognate words—first cousins, second cousin words—that are built on the word "Kirino." Several of them. One of them is "Apo carino," usually in the middle passive "Apo quino mei," but "Apo Kino." "Apo" is the Greek preposition "away from"; "cremino" is "to judge." That word is used all the time—over 230 times in the New Testament—and it usually translates the simple word you're familiar with: "to answer." You understand that when you give an answer, you are called to dispense your judgment on a topic. Someone asks you a question—why? Because they want your take on it. Your take, or your response, is how you judge that. Every time you're asked a question, you are called to judge something. What is your opinion? What is your thinking? What is your assessment? That's "apo carino."

"Crina" is all over the Bible. As a matter of fact, just to use the book of Luke, you'll see it in very simple ways—like, here's Luke 7:43, Luke 7:43. Simon is asked a question about who's going to love more—the one who is forgiven a lot, or the one who was forgiven a little. And Peter answers, "Well, the one, I suppose," he says to Christ, "who had the larger debt canceled." And Jesus says, "You have judged rightly." It's not even the word "apo Keno" here—it's the word "Kirino." You have made a proper, right assessment. You've answered the question correctly. Now usually we have the word "answer," which is in the text, by the way—Simon "Oppo keynote" him—he answered him, and he gave him the right answer. And Jesus says, "You've 'printed' correctly"—you've made a proper distinction between right and wrong, good and bad. You've made that distinction. You do that all the time. It's called upon all the time.

Luke 12—just to stay in Luke; it's all over the New Testament—Luke 12:57: "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" Jesus—if you want to judge, and you want to judge what's right, and you want to make that decision, you ought to assess things. Even at the end of time, Luke 22:30—when he speaks about the people, the apostles that are faithful—they're going to sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes. You will make assessments. You will make distinctions between better and best, right and wrong. You are going to be in the position—and it's a good thing; it's an important thing.



So much so is this a part of what all of us should do that Jesus says when you don't do it, you're in sin in a lot of cases. For instance—well, let's make it a practical illustration. If my wife comes home with bruised bananas from the supermarket, I'm going to say, "Wow, you know, I like to go back," and I'll give this a shot. By the way, if you want to see where there's a lot of keynoting going on, it's in the produce section of the grocery store. When you throw the SpaghettiOs or the can of beans into your cart—your nurse, whatever—you just grab one. But watch everybody in the produce aisle. A lot of thumping, a lot of looking, a lot of touching, a lot of feeling. What are you doing? Why don't you go and quote this passage—"Judge not"? No, I have to judge. Why? Because I'm making distinctions now between the bananas that my family is going to like to eat and the bananas they would not like to eat; the cantaloupes that I think are going to be good and the watermelons that I think are going to be sweet and tasty. I'm making distinctions there.

"That's crazy." No—if you don't make distinctions about your produce, okay, your family won't like that. If you don't make distinction between right and wrong in the church, the Bible says you'll be chided for it—rebuked by God. Here's an example—and I know it sounds silly, but it's an example from Corinth. It's a real historical example in the church. They didn't want to judge anybody. They took statements like this from Christ—"Judge not"—and they made it an absolute statement like, "Well, I'm never going to judge anybody on anything." They had people in the church—maybe you remember this early part of First Corinthians; he addresses this—they had a guy in the church that was in an incestuous relationship with a family member. And they didn't want to judge him. So they were like, "Oh, you know, well, who am I to judge?" I don't know—whatever their lines were. That probably sounds familiar as the nightly news. They said that; they thought that; they didn't judge.

Paul now writes them and rebukes them. And he said, "You should have judged the man, and you should have cast him out of the church. You should have assessed that his behavior was wrong, and you should have responded to it with church discipline and kicked him out." Now, you're going to get in trouble if you don't judge in many cases in the Bible.

I think in First John chapter 4—John says, "Hey, you guys that are trying to learn more about Christ—you're not judging the teachers. You were just accepting whatever they say. You're being gullible." He says, "Don't you know that many false teachers have gone out in the world?" Just like false prophets there were in the Old Testament. You should make those judgments—Jesus addressed that. "You're going to know them by their fruits." They may look like, on first glance, sheep—but they may be wolves in sheep's clothing. Examine them. Watch them. See their fruit. Make a distinction.

We see it all over the New Testament—even in the preaching of the gospel. I'm supposed to know those who are saved and those who are not. And even when I preach the gospel to someone who's lost, according to First Peter chapter 4, I am judging them in their flesh. I am saying, "What you are is lost and you need Christ. And if you don't turn to Christ, you're going to be lost forever." That's



an act of judgment—distinction. Jesus calls for it more than any other writer in the New Testament—the capturing of Christ’s words on this. He’s always calling us to make those distinctions between right and wrong. And if you fail to, you’ll be in trouble with God.

So whatever Luke 6:37 means, it can’t mean “Don’t ever judge anyone,” because people in the Bible get in trouble for not judging anyone. You’re supposed to judge a certain kinds of judgment—a righteous judgment.

Letter C. That brings us to whatever is going on in Luke 6 must be a kind of judging that the Bible says is wrong. So, again, we’re talking systematically now—we’re stepping back and getting the big picture of judging in the Bible. What kinds of judging in the Bible are considered wrong? Let me give you three categories, and then we’ll hone into what’s going on in Luke 6—that’ll transition to the second point.

Okay. When it comes to judging in the Bible, there is—let’s give it a heading—letter C: there’s judging that goes wrong. When judging goes wrong—it’s a kind of bad judging that God prohibits. There’s a lot of judging that you’re required to make, and if you don’t make it, you’re in trouble with God. But there’s a kind of judging that’s gone wrong—it’s out of control. Let me give you three passages on this real quick.

The first one is in Romans chapter 14. Let’s turn to this one and have you look at it—Romans chapter 14. I’ll give you headings for these after we look at each text. Let’s start with Romans chapter 14. You’ll see the word “credo” throughout this text—to judge. It’s a kind of judging that God says, “Don’t do.” “Well, wait a minute—you’re saying elsewhere ‘judge’?” What kind of judging is this? Let’s look at it.

Verse 1—Romans chapter 14, verse 1: “As for the one who is weak in faith”—now, you’ve got to catch the larger historical context of this. Here’s a church—we learn this in the last part of Romans—filled with Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, unfortunately, were coming out of a conditioned conscience to keep the ceremonial laws, like worshiping on Saturday, eating the kosher meals—all of that was part of their upbringing. It was something that, if their faith wasn’t strong, their conscience was stricken when they, you know, were offered bacon or a ham sandwich. They couldn’t do it—like, “Oh, I can’t do that.”

The Bible here says, “Hey, as for the one that’s weak in faith—hey, welcome him, and don’t quarrel over opinions.” Apparently there were wars breaking out in the Roman church in the early church here where they were saying, “Well, you shouldn’t,” and “No, you should.” Well, here’s the thing



about the dietary restrictions of the Old Testament: with the coming of Christ, they were rescinded. Like all the other ceremonial laws—like the worship in the temple, like the priesthood—they were all rescinded. So now you could eat as much bacon as you wanted—as long as you weren't a glutton, you could eat your bacon. You didn't have to eat kosher anymore. So now it's an opinion. Now it's a preference whether you eat bacon or you don't; whether you eat kosher or you don't.

The Bible says, "Well, I know there's one person who believes that he can eat anything, and there's another person—he's weak—he believes he can only eat vegetables because his conscience is still bound to his upbringing. Now, let the one who eats—let not the one who eats, rather—no, underline this word—despise the one who abstains." Now there's going to be our parallel word in this context. "Let not the one who eats"—right, he eats non-kosher food—"despise the one who's eating kosher. And let not the one who abstains"—now here's the parallel—"pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him—received him."

In other words, God no longer—and this is no longer—a moral issue, what kind of food you're eating. It was in the Old Testament because it was required—just like if you didn't bring your sacrifice or go to the priesthood and worship in the worship center and go there for the feast. Now, not an issue. Why? Because God doesn't care what you eat. Right? It's all to be received with thanksgiving. Here it says, if you have the opinion that you shouldn't be eating non-kosher meals, you cannot pass judgment—parallel word "despise"—that one, look down upon him, because God doesn't care about that stuff anymore.

"Who are you"—now you gotta get the context; with that in mind, you can read verse 4—"Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?" Now have one Christian sitting in the corner of the Corinthian church, looks down the aisle and sees the guy who's in an incestuous sexual relationship, and goes over to them during the greeting time and says, "Oh, by the way, I need to talk to you about what you're doing. And everybody knows what you're doing, and it's wrong." He could now quote this and say, "Hey, who are you to pass judgment on another man's servant?" What's the difference? This is not about something that God has said is an enforceable requirement of what it means to walk with Christ. In other words, this is not the issue of what the Bible says. Because when it comes to kosher meals, I can't pass judgment because it's no longer a requirement of the Scripture.

Therefore, let's call it this—number one: we cannot—here's judging gone wrong—we cannot be judging preferences. Don't judge preferences. Judgments go wrong when I'm judging based on what I think you ought to do, or—as it's put in verse 1—the opinions. Who am I to pass judgment on the servant of another when it comes to things that the Bible doesn't say? It is before his own master—verse 4 completes the sentence—it's before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand, because He doesn't care about that anymore. He doesn't care about the day of the week anymore. He doesn't care about the dietary laws anymore. He cares about the things that are valid and in vogue for this dispensation. And that still



includes whether or not you're having sex with a family member—that is wrong. As the Bible says, "When your brother sins, go to him and point out his fault." That's a kind of judgment.

Now, if I say, "Well, you know what, we have our quiet time with our family in the mornings, and it's great to start our day that way—and you should do that too." Listen—that's not what the Bible says that we all must do. The Bible doesn't say that. That's an opinion. That's a preference. You cannot judge someone who doesn't do the things that are just preferences or opinions for you. Don't pass—that's judgment gone wrong.

More I could say on that, but we're out of time—whatever it might be. And you understand—you see the category; you understand what we're talking about, right? Oh, I think we are. Even though our Bible reading schedule—we say, "Hey, here it is—daily Bible reading. It'd be great for you to read the Bible." But you know what the Bible doesn't say? And God has not commanded that we all gotta read the Bible reading schedule. You need to read the Bible; if you don't read the Bible, that's sin. But you see what I'm saying. When it comes to prayer—if that's our preference—I can't judge you based on a preference. I can only look at the Scripture and make the distinction of right and wrong based on what the Bible says. Therefore, judging out of control is when I'm judging preferences, not commands in the Bible.

Secondly—if you go back to our text—well, let's save that one. Let's go to First Corinthians 4—sorry. There's another kind of judgment that goes wrong that we're prohibited from doing and making. First Corinthians chapter 4. And I guess I should explain the historical context of Corinthians, which I think sometimes we miss when we read passages like this. Paul is being attacked by people that really want to usurp his authority amongst the Corinthians. And so he's constantly—beginning here in this text—having to defend himself by people that are castigating him and impugning his motives. So Paul—it reaches a crescendo in Second Corinthians—he's constantly trying to defend his apostleship. And he even feels bad for it and apologizes at one point—"That's crazy; I know that I'm doing this, but I need to tell you"—and he's trying to defend himself with all this opinion—negative opinion—about him.

Here he points out a problem that his critics have. And he puts it in the first person, so let's just read it and jump into verse 2—First Corinthians 4:2: "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful," which is one of God's—Christ's—favorite metaphors, right? We are stewards, and we've got to come and be accountable to Him. That's the picture of a steward—being found faithful. There'll be a day of accountability.

Now, he says—now bear with me as a steward—"It's a very small thing that I should be judged by you"—there's our word, "keynote"—"or by any human court." Now, what are you talking about? Now you've got already in view in the opening statement in verse 2 that idea of standing before the



Master with that definitive assessment and the response—the gracious response of a rewarding God, rewarding us for our behavior. That’s the thing. And now you’re saying, “Now wait a minute. It’s not a big deal what you do in terms of that definitive assessment—so small thing—or any other human court.” In fact, he says, “I do not even judge—Keno—myself.” Now, you’ve got to define “judge” in this context by what he’s saying: I don’t even make a definitive assessment of my own life and say, “Well, I deserve this much reward from God.” I can’t even make that. It doesn’t mean he doesn’t check his heart or pray Psalm 139: “Try me, know me, search my heart. I want to know if I’m doing...” Of course he checks his conscience. Of course he’s responsive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. But when it comes to the definitive assessment at the end of time, I don’t even judge myself. “Though,” he says, “I’m not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted”—there’s the language of definitive assessment, end of time, bema seat of Christ. “It is the Lord”—I’m talking about that kind of—it’s the Lord who judges me.

Verse 5: “Therefore”—now that’s the context of this prohibition—“do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes”—that’s the time I’m talking about—“who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes or motives of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.” I already quoted that text, but you see what’s happening here. I cannot pass judgment on you when it comes to how much praise or how great it was that you did something. I can’t definitively do that, because I can’t see part of what’s in that equation that’s important to God—and that’s the purposes, or as we would put it, the motives of your heart. I can’t do that.

Now, that was the chronic problem that Paul had in the court of public opinion in Corinth—everyone was impugning his motives. I call it this—number two—judgment gone wrong: it’s judging as mind reader. Now, follow me on this. It’s judging as mind reader. I am now going to impugn your motive because I think I know why you did that. I think I know your heart—when you lead that group or you signed up for that ministry or you did that thing or you said that or you... I think I know your motive, so I’m going to... I cannot pass judgment like that on you in that regard.

In other words, when you do something, I can’t even say, “Here’s the definitive assessment of what I think you did and the praise you deserve.” I don’t even know, because I can’t see your motives. And by the way, if you want to know how chronic this is—in debate—I don’t know if you took debate in college or whatever—but if you think about how people debate issues today—this is not just in the church (which is going on all the time; what’s going on in Corinth—that’s going on here), but when it comes to talk radio or the pundits on television or the news channels, watch how often they pass judgment as mind readers. They apparently can see right through the forehead into the brain and figure out why people did what they did. They say it all the time. And I think to myself, “Can’t you guys see that that is so illogical? You can’t know what someone meant.” I can’t. So, in the church—certainly—not that this is a broader, you know, political commentary on the culture: we need to stick to the things that we can assess as right and wrong—and that’s behavior, words. I cannot condemn, castigate, impugn why you did that. So that’s the kind of judgment I can’t pass.

Some people say, “Well, it’s not what he said; it’s how he said it.” How many times have you heard that? Well, “How he said it”—maybe he had a burrito and he had indigestion. He said it... but I don’t know why he said it that way. I can’t judge what the guy was thinking when he said it. All I can tell you is what he said. So stop with all of that. Catch yourself next time and know that you’re passing a sinful kind of judgment when you’re assuming to know someone’s motive. You can’t possibly know that. Judging preferences—judgment gone wrong. Judging as mind reader—silly, foolish—shouldn’t do it. Bible condemns it.

Thirdly—back to our text, Luke 6. Let’s get the broader context of what’s in view in terms of judgment here. Luke 6. Now, we’ve only read the first two words, “Judge not.” We’re going to get to the rest of this to try and understand what it’s actually saying in a minute. And if you’re doing the math on the time—stop.

Luke 6: “Judge not.” There’s a kind of judgment even in the larger context of this discussion that helps us understand a third kind of category of wrong judging. Drop to verse 42. Here it is—this is a bad one: “How can you say to your brother”—this is Luke 6:42—“How can you say to your brother, ‘Hey, brother, let me take out the speck that’s in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye?” Now, Jesus is big on hyperbole and shocking language. If you really had a log in your eye, you’d be at the ER. We’d be wondering if you’re going to survive. This is clearly hyperbole to say: you’re trying to take this thing out that irritates you, that you think that person shouldn’t have there, and there’s something bigger in the same category, in the same vein, in the same kind of problem—you’ve got the same kind of problem and it’s a lot bigger. That’s the comparison here. Jesus is big on that kind of large, obvious, almost comical contrast.

So the point here is that you are saying, “Hey, you shouldn’t do that,” and I’m doing the same kind of thing. He calls those people—what next word?—“hypocrite.” By the way, underline that word. Since we’re on the “credo” family of words in the New Testament—“hypocrite” is not a translation; it’s a transliteration. You’ve heard me say that 100 times about words in the Bible. “Hypocrite” is a transliteration—it just takes the Greek words and slides them into the Latinized form and we read it in English—“hypocrite.” Listen now: “hupo, carino”—“hupo crina, hupo crinum.” “Hypocrite.” That’s the word. “Carino” is the root word, and that means “to judge.” “Hupo” is another Greek preposition—the preposition “under.” And think about this: a hypocrite is someone you’d have to get under what you see to make the proper judgment. A hypocrite is someone that has one appearance on the surface, but underneath—different judgment. I would assess it differently. I’d have to get under to see really what’s right and wrong here because I can’t see it. Because there is—as Jesus said—people that are sometimes like a whitewashed tomb: they look great on the outside, but on the inside, full of dead men’s bones.



Now, when you're reaching out to correct someone's sin, you look like the righteous person correcting someone's sin. But the hypocrite is someone who's got the same problem in their lives—they just don't see it. They don't admit it. They're sitting there somehow overlooking this or rationalizing it in their own lives. It is—third category—hypocritical judging. That's judging gone wrong—hypocrite.

Now, how do you fix hypocritical judgment? Well, I want you to write down number three. Get back to verse 42. Here's how you solve that problem: "You 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." Now, here's the thing: the reason "log" and "speck" are helpful is because you know your life much better than you know the life of the person that you're about to correct. You may see in some small group that you're in, "Hey, you know what—what he just said, and the way—and if he really does business that way, I think that's dishonest, and his sales technique is dishonesty." So you see some part—some little piece of the pie of his life where you said, "You know what? God is not pleased with that—that is wrong. He shouldn't be doing that." And so you want to reach out, and you want to say, "Hey, you know what—like the Bible says, you know, if you see your brother sin a sin, go point out his fault. So I just want to point out the fault here—what you said about how you do business in your sales job. I'm really—you know what—you can... I'm just telling you, it's not honest."

When in your heart, if you just turned around and looked in your own life, maybe the way that you function at work, in terms of honesty, is completely dishonest. And you don't even think about it. The Bible calls that hypocritical judgment. And he prohibits it. Well, he actually says, "Fix it." And how do you fix it? You deal with your own dishonesty. You confess that before God. You repent of it. And now you can see clearly to correct your brother with the same problem.

Now, this doesn't mean every problem in your life has to be solved before you can point out the fault of another, or no one would be preaching to anybody or pointing out any faults. And that's the world I know that you want, right? That's the world we want: "You don't tell me I'm wrong, and I won't tell you you're wrong." But that's not the world of the Bible. The world of the Bible is: you need to make sure that there's integrity in your life about the thing you're going to correct in someone else's life. That's what—about hypocritical judgment. When judging goes wrong: judging preferences; judging as mind reader; hypocritical.

Now, our passage—finally—if we had time to look at it. Here we go. We haven't even read it yet. That's the introduction. Oh boy—we're in trouble. Verse 37—there are four commands: two prohibitions, two positive commands. Let's read them—verse 37: "Judge not"—here's the motivation—"and you will not be judged. Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you'll be forgiven. Give, and it'll be given to you." And he goes on and explains how much—"a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, it'll be put in your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." Back to the commands: judge not, condemn not, forgive, and give.

Now, I said the word “judge” is so broad—the context has to tell me what kind of judgment you’re talking about. Here’s the word that’s put next to it: “condemn.” Here’s the word that’s put as a contrast: “forgive.” And another word: “give.” Whatever judgment we’re talking about, it has that flavor of being condemning, and it has the flavor of being unforgiving and being a non-giving person—not magnanimous. “Condemning” helps us—“kata de kado.” And what does that mean? To condemn—it’s a harsh word. “Kata de kado” is a term related to the definitive assessment of God and the just penalty assigned. It is that first supreme category of God’s coming judgment that we talked about and the first subcategory of that first point—and that is this: when God responds to condemn the lost. And he passes that “kata de kado” on them, where he says, “I, as a just judge, am sitting here looking at your wrong; I’ve made a definitive assessment, and I’m assigning a punishment.” That—the Bible says—is helping us in this context understand what you mean by “cremino.” That’s the kind of “credo” you’re talking about. It’s the kind of “credo” that refuses to forgive and refuses to give. That’s what we’re concerned about.

Now, if you want to paint a picture of all of that and put it in a phrase—I tried to for you; don’t laugh at it; it may sound weird, but maybe it will help you remember what Jesus is getting at here—number two on your outline, jot this down if you would: what God is trying to get us to avoid is becoming a petty, angry grump. That’s what we’re looking at. The petty person—won’t forgive, won’t give. Angry person—wants to condemn and assign ultimate blame to people. Grump—always in that bitter, frustrated mindset. That is what Jesus is preaching against here. He’s not preaching against, when someone is in your life who’s in sin, going to your brother and pointing it out—calling the lost to repentance. He isn’t talking about that. We’re talking about people who become unforgiving, un giving, condemning—passing ultimate judgment on people. That’s the kind of judging we’re talking about: don’t do that.

Now, quickly—if you’re not going to be a petty, angry grump, how do we avoid that? Well, one of the strategies, which we’re going to package next week into a broader category of blind leading the blind—we’ll look at that next week—let me just extract what we ended with in the first half of the sermon—not really half, first part of the sermon—and let’s make that strategy letter A, and that is this: that if you’ve got a speck in your brother’s eye that you want to rightly pass judgment on—and by that I mean help him fix it and point it out—you need to, letter A, judge first in the mirror—that’s the way I put it. You need to make sure that you’re looking in your own eyes to see if there’s any—any kind of specks; wood, you know, sticks, toothpicks, branches—in your eye. You want to make sure and clean all of that out so you can see clearly to help your brother. You need to judge yourself first.

Remember the story in 2 Samuel 12: David had committed adultery, and he was trying to hide and run from that. And like a lot of people who are in sin and not confessing it, they’re rationalizing and justifying it. Nathan comes—sent by God—to confront him. And he does it with a story. And he says, “Hey, David, I’ve got a guy in your kingdom—what should we do with him? He’s a really rich guy—got a lot of cattle, a lot of sheep, a lot of food in his backyard, and he had a guy come in



to visit him from out of town, and so they needed a feast, and they needed to, you know, kill a fattened lamb. But instead of going into his own corral, he went to his neighbor that only had one animal—one little ewe lamb—and that's all the neighbor had; he's a poor neighbor. And he took that lamb and he killed that lamb and he fed it to his guests. Hey, Dave, what should we do with this guy?" Remember that story? David said, "That man deserves to die." Now that wasn't, you know, the kingly decree, because he goes on to say he needs to pay back four times as much. But in his heart he was so stirred—"How terrible is that? How insensitive! That's wrong!" He says, "He deserves to die. All right, make him pay back four times as much."

Now, the parallel he couldn't see: here's Bathsheba—the one wife of his neighbor. And he's got a whole harem. Really, if you have any kind of impulses tonight, you've got a whole choice down the hall here. You can have sex with any one of your harem that you'd like—concubines galore—and God's day of indulgence in that in the ancient Near Eastern kings (which wasn't a good thing and he later condemns it). But during this period—David, you've got a need—you can meet it. You, though, because you're kind of whatever—you're feeling lonely—you're going to steal your neighbor's wife? Come on—that's horrible.

So Nathan says, after—can you see how clearly that's bad when you're thinking about someone else? How does Nathan respond? The one-liner—the stinking one-liner from 2 Samuel 12: "You're the man." That man you just condemned—that you were so good at rationalizing our own problems. The point of looking at the world a little differently as you deal with people that irritate you and annoy you, so it doesn't become bitterness and hostility in your character, is remembering how in your own life there's all this rationalization that goes on. You need to make sure that you're always careful to think through your own sin. It's that whole idea of assessing yourself first.

Don't have time for it, but Romans chapter 2—I think maybe the discussion questions take you there—just to think through that kind of disparity between accurately judging someone else and not judging yourself the same way. I always use this freeway illustration on this: someone kind of weaves into your lane, and you're like, "Learning to drive!" And you have that whole moment. And then, like the next day on the commute, you know, you didn't—you dropped something; something fell on the ground—your file—and so you're fishing around, and you weave into the guy's lane. And he starts to, "Learn to drive!" And—"Oh, sorry!" Now, what you want him to do is to sit back there as you weave into his lane and say, "Oh, I'm sure that that guy is just reaching for an important file under his... I understand." They never understand. And you never understand. But you always understand yourself. You always give yourself a break. You always say, "Well, I'm not a bad driver; I just had, you know, something happen here." You always have a reason.

And the point is: you just need to start recognizing as you get outside of yourself to see for just a minute how we're so easy on ourselves, and we're hard on other people. Wait a minute—we need to be harder on ourselves. And even, in some cases, it makes us just a little bit easier on other people because we realize we've done those same things. Now, do we overlook sin? Do we lower



the standards of God? Do we toss the valuations of...? No, no, no. But we always judge first in the mirror, and that has such a transformative effect on our character.

I already quoted Psalm 139, but verses 23 and 24—if you want to talk about a prayer to pray frequently—"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! See if there is any grievous or wicked way in me." You pray that prayer every single day, and with honesty and sincerity, I don't think you'll ever degenerate into that bitter, grumpy, petty frump.

Secondly, one of the strategies here—and it's even given for us, thankfully—the word "forgive" is given to us in verse 37. One of the problems is we often forget the forgiveness we've already received. This text is "forgiven, you'll be forgiven"—not that we earn our forgiveness from anyone or from God by forgiving—but when we think about the forgiveness that we need, we often are much more forgiving and understanding to those who wronged us. Let's put it this way—letter B: you want to not become that petty, angry, grumpy? Then you need to ponder your canceled debt. God has taken your sin—nailed it to the cross. He has forgiven it. You need to ponder that regularly—ponder your forgiven debt. It has been torn up. And because of that, you need to say, "Wow, look at the way God has been gracious to me." Now, this morning—speaking of our daily Bible reading (which is not the law of God, but the suggestion of the church; it would be good if you read with us)—we were reading the second half of Matthew chapter 18 this morning. If not this morning, maybe you do it in the evening, which is fine.

In Matthew 18, Jesus tells a parable about this guy who racked up a debt with his master. And the Bible says he racked up a debt of 10,000 talents. And you go, "I'm sure that's a lot." You don't know what a talent is. A talent—something on television that people don't know. Here's what a talent is: a talent is 60 pounds of silver. Ten thousand talents.

Now, this week silver was trading at about 20 bucks an ounce. You want to modernize that number? Think about this now—\$20 an ounce; a talent is 60 pounds of silver. You want to do the math? I've already done it for you. It is 211 million dollars. The picture is an ancient Near Eastern landowner and a homeowner who's got a servant, and he has racked up so many meals at the commissary of this palatial mansion that he has a 211 million dollar debt. Some expensive sodas. I don't know—how do you rack up a debt like that? It's comical—it's like the log in the eye Jesus thing. Can you imagine that? It's a silly \$211 million. He begs for his life because he can't pay it back. He was going to have him sent to prison until he could pay it. "No, no, please forgive me." It says the master had pity on him. So he forgave him his debt. Remember the story?

That's not where the story ends. That forgiven servant saw another servant that owed him—now here's what it says—100 denarii. I know "denarii" is not a word you used at work this week, so even that's like, "Oh, I don't know. Is that a lot?" It's not a lot. It's the minimum wage for a really



common blue-collar worker—one day’s wage. 100 denarii. Let’s just rough-and-dirty it with today’s minimum wage—it’s about seven, eight thousand dollars. Now, this servant just got forgiven 211 million dollars. Now he sees a guy that he works with that owes him \$8,000. Let’s just round it up. He sees him. He says, “I need that money back.” He says, “I can’t pay you back. Have mercy—have pity on me.” He doesn’t. He starts beating him. He’s gonna say, “No, you have to pay me every cent.”

Now, if someone sitting in the aisle in front of you owed you \$8,000, I’m sure you would stare into the back of his neck for a while during church today. “He owes me \$8,000.” You would—you’d think about it. But let’s just—here’s the picture of Christ—the guy in the row behind you just forgave your debt of 211 million dollars. And he hasn’t stared at the back of your neck the entire service. He’s worshiping, he’s listening to the pastor, because—why?—he forgave the debt. That was your debt.

Now, how do we feel about a person who owed \$211 million, got it all forgiven, sees his coworker who owes him \$8,000, and just has to have it, and is threatening to sue him if he doesn’t get it back? The master finds out—he’s not happy. All that came, by the way, on the heels of a question by Peter in the passage this morning. Peter said, “If someone sins against me, how many times should I forgive him? Seven?” Sounds like a lot. Jesus said, “Let me tell you a story.”

Here’s the point, Peter: how much have you been forgiven? There is no one on planet Earth who is going to be as annoying or hostile or frustrating or irritating to you—who’s going to rack up anywhere close to the debt in your relationship that you’ve racked up with the holy, perfect God. God took all of your sin—nailed it to the cross. You need to look at people with a much more magnanimous, giving, forgiving spirit and ponder your forgiven debt.

Lastly, if you look at this—which I wish I had more time—verse 37 and the beginning of 38: “Judge not—you will not be judged; condemn not—you will not be condemned; forgive—you’ll be forgiven; give—and it’ll be given to you.” Look at the very last line of verse 38: “For with the measure you use, it’ll be measured back to you.” Now that seems like horizontal reciprocity—something you’d tell your kids: “I know your brother wants to use that, and it’s not convenient. But, you know, if you would lend to your brother when he needs it, I’ll bet when you’re in a jam your brother will be generous and lend to you. So, you know what? Give your brother that.” Now, that’s parental encouragement with the thought of horizontal reciprocity. That makes sense, and I get that.

But I’ve got a problem in the middle—verse 38—when he says, “Give, and it’ll be given to you.” He doesn’t say, “Hey, with the measure you’ve used...” Well, that’s how he ends the section. But he says this—how will it be given? “Good measure, pressed down, shaken together”—running over—“it’ll be put in your lap.” You’ve got to get the picture, by the way, in the ancient days—

when you went to get barley or wheat or whatever—it actually is a picture in Ruth, when Ruth goes to Boaz’s people there—she takes out her cloak, and she does like this, so that they could pour the wheat into her lap—the barley—and then she went home with it. That’s the picture. That’s like, you know, your grocery bag—which I hear they’re going to ban our plastic grocery bags—don’t get me started on that; I’ll have to start wearing a cloak so I can have my own bag with me. So, whatever—the bag that was your shopping bag—your cloak—and you pull it up, and the text says: you give to people, and look at how it’s going to come back. It’s going to come back in good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.

Now, that picture doesn’t seem like horizontal reciprocity. You want to look through the Bible for horizontal reciprocity principle in terms of “You be nice, and they’ll be nice to you”—you’ll find it. But then you’ll find this interesting thing about God calling us to be forgiving and magnanimous and not condemning—and not that kind of judge. Well, you know what it often says—I think of the Proverbs where it says, “If you give in your generosity to someone, it’s not like you’re lending to them; it’s like you’re lending to their Maker.” God’s going to pay you back. See, God’s got—it’s like my kids—when I say that to my kids: “You know, if you lend that to your brother, and you be generous, I’m sure it’ll come back to you.” When he does that willingly and wholeheartedly, you know the thing that really matters is how Dad responds to that—because I’ve got a bigger wallet than the brother has.

So when it comes to reciprocity, what matters here is the vertical reciprocity. And you should realize that—back to the story in Matthew 28. The story ends by the master finding out. And when the master finds out, he is—here’s what the text says—angry. And now he turns on this one.

Now, think about this. Here’s the thing we should never forget: when a text causes us to be magnanimous and forgiving and stop being that angry, petty grump—don’t be that person—the Bible wants us to be aware—letter C—of the perceptions of God. I put it this way: consider God’s perceptions. That may seem a bit philosophical or a step removed, but you need to get this, because so many Christians, I find, view their Christian life as some kind of computer algorithm. It’s not—you know that, right? God is a person. When God watches you be magnanimous, merciful, caring, forgiving, understanding—when you show that kind of actions to other people and you don’t allow yourself to be this petty, angry, negative, bitter person—when that doesn’t set into your heart, God sees that. As hard as it is, in an irksome world that we live in, God responds—how? “Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over—I’ll be putting it...” It’s a win-win. People are more apt to be kind and generous to you, and God is kind and merciful and generous to you in larger measure. Consider the perceptions of God. As Proverbs 15:3 says, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.” There’s not a single thing you do to another person that God is not watching, having a perception of and evaluation of, and here’s the promise of the Bible: He responds.



Does He want you to disregard the standards of holiness? No. Does He want you to overlook sin like it's no big deal? No. Does He want you to be merciful, understanding, gracious, kind, optimistic? Yeah. He wants that. He requires that. He demands it. And it will go well with you if you do.

You know, I started this sermon with a statement—it may have startled some of you who are not well-versed in the Bible. I talked about Jesus having all these experiences and emotions of frustration and anger and being irritated and all that. Some of you thought, “I can’t believe that.” It’s all over the New Testament. If you read the Gospels, you’ll find he went into the worship center and did what? You remember the story—twice he did it. What did he do? Did he tip over tables like this? “Oh, stop that.” No. What did the Bible say before he tipped the tables? He got a cord and made a whip out of it. Now you’re picturing Indiana Jones going down in church—ahh! Jesus got so angry at what he saw, he threw those tables over, and with a whip, he drove them out. Wow. It’s anger. Why? Because the temple was messed up right then.

He looked at the people that kept accusing him, and the Bible says he looked at them—Mark 3—and he was angry at them, because they were just out to condemn him unjustly. He said at one point in Matthew 17—he looked at the generation—he said, “This is a twisted generation. How long will I put up with you?” Jesus got irritated on earth a lot. Why? Because he was righteous. He couldn’t fail but to see sin and be frustrated with it.

But at the worst moment of the sinners hostilely attacking Christ—and there’s no worse picture than him hanging on a cross, humiliated and naked, seeing—I’m sure through swollen eye sockets after having been beat by Roman soldiers—slits of his eyes as he looked down from the cross, blood streaming down the sides of his temple because they put this crown of thorns to mock him—“Oh, you’re some king; here’s a crown for you”—and as they spat upon him after they beat him, and as they hung him on a cross to die and jeered at him—do we have a bitter, hostile, radical Messiah? He looks out through those swollen eyes, and he says, “Father, forgive them. They don’t know what they’re doing.” They don’t understand the extent of what they’re doing. They don’t get it. And will they be held culpable? Is he saying, “It’s okay. It’s okay to crucify me”? No—none of that. But he has a heart that never degenerated into bitterness, anger, hostility that settled into his personality.

Understand, those are two ditches—we’ve got to avoid them both. Starts with understanding what it means to “judge not.”

Stand with me. We’re out of time. We’re gonna sing. But let’s just pray and let you go. Pray with me, please.



God, hard for us in a day that people with their own agendas like to lift little phrases out of the Bible like this, use them against us when they don't like our gospel, they don't like our message, they don't want to be confronted on their sin—whatever. Clearly, that's not what this text is saying, because the whole Bible has got a message that helps us understand and balance out this idea of judgment.

In this context, though, we understand what it means when we see the rest of the context. And we know we can't be the kind of people that are such petty, nitpicky people that we never apply the same standard that we're using on others on ourselves. We treat people like we haven't been forgiven a gigantic debt; that we never really think about you and how you view our dealings with other people. God, we need to put all that into action in our own lives—never overlooking sin like it doesn't matter, but having a heart that's much more toward others like it is toward ourselves, which is—like we understand—no, it doesn't excuse our sin. Sometimes it helps us understand our sin.

So God, this is such a balancing act because the Bible has so much to say about our response to a world that's messed up. But I pray we could find that balance point here in our lives—not leaving saying, “Oh, you know, que sera, sera—people do whatever they want; it doesn't matter; I'll never condemn anybody.” Of course, we need to pass judgment from time to time—and often, really—in our lives and in the lives of those around us. We need to evaluate fruit. All those things are true and biblical. But God, I know that some of us here—it's easy just to be drawn into the ditch of just being that cantankerous, frustrated, condemning personality. Free us from that, God. Let us be more like Christ—your Son—who perfectly displayed these attributes; who could be irked on one day and then, in another, look at people in sin and say, “You know what? They're like sheep without a shepherd—harassed and helpless. They need help.” Give us that balance in our own lives and our understanding of this text. Help us.

Thanks for this crowd—their endurance of my sermons and the time that we spend here. Bless them for being good learners, good listeners. I pray we'd be better Christians this week. We watch your Spirit apply these things in our lives as we give ourselves to resolve to do what this text says. Help us in this, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.