

We are in trouble

Luke 6:31-38

How many of you have ever heard someone say, “**Don’t judge me!**”

- Especially from non-Christians (but Christians too)

National surveys have revealed that 87% of non-Christians see Christians as judgmental¹

Another key perception of Christians by non-Christians is that we are “insensitive to others”²

This interplay between well-meaning Christians and not-yet-Christians is so well known that it has made its way into popular culture and can make for some funny moments

(FILM CLIP: “Why you always judging me?” from *Nacho Libre*)

No doubt Nacho was **insensitive**... but did he really **judge or condemn** Eskeleto?

- Is telling someone they need to be “baptized” being judgmental?
 - Or is that telling the truth?
 - The way we tell the truth matters. Don’t want to be insensitive
 - Speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15)

But our efforts seem to be less than super effective... (perceptions)

Part of this is because not-yet-Christians do not understand the role that Jesus asks Christians to play in the world (**salt and light**—**exposing and confronting corruption and darkness**)

- Part is because people just want to do what they want to do
 - And this phrase is their escape clause (Bob Marley)
- And part of this is because we actually are judgmental and insensitive

What is going to be most helpful for us today and best advance the Mission of Christ is to see the way that we fail in this area...

- ... rather than the way not-yet-Christians (and cheesy Christians) fail to understand what this means and use it as a ruse to do what they want to do

How are we supposed to be **salt and light** and yet not **judge or condemn**?

What is the difference between telling someone they need to repent (**truth-telling**) and judging and condemning them?

First of all, what does it mean to judge in general?

- In a basic sense (Webster’s dictionary) it means: **to form an opinion about something of someone through careful weighing of evidence and testing of premises**³
 - **This is not what we are talking about when we speak of Jesus warning us no to judge**

¹ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity... and Why it Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 97.

² Ibid.

³ Inc. Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary., Eleventh ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

- We have to do this sort of judging all the time
 - Government
 - Church discipline
 - Doctrinal teaching
 - Right from wrong
 - Who we date
 - Who we do business with
 - Who we hire
 - Who we let babysit our children
 - Who we let our kids hang out with
 - What movies we watch

We are constantly having to **discern** right from wrong in people, situations and ideas...

- ...we also have to constantly **correct** error, **speak** the truth and **confront** what is wrong. (salt and light)

The challenge we face daily is to hold these things we find in Scripture in tension: **confronting evil but not condemning people?**

We start by separating the two: evil and people

- That is not to say that people are not in some way evil, we are
- But our battle is not against flesh and blood (Eph 6)
- God hates evil and yet loves people

This issue of judging and condemning as we find it in the NT is essentially a “people issue”

- It is part of the implications of the Second greatest commandment

If we get an idea of what it means to condemn, this will help us start to think about this:

- **Condemn:** To express complete disapproval of someone⁴

Where we usually express this disapproval is in our own hearts... a “heart issue”

- Sometimes in safe, like-minded company
- Sometimes publically
 - But it is generally **an issue of the heart**
 - Where we, who have caused ourselves to be worthy of disapproval but have been approved of by God because of grace and mercy, **refuse to extend** that same sort of grace and mercy toward others
 - It is, for sure, thinking better of ourselves than of others (superiority)
 - And in a way thinking better of ourselves than God!!! (because we can't be merciful like him)

We must let ourselves our thinking and our relationships be radically Gospel saturated!

- One of the primary evidences that we know and have believed the Gospel is that we have a deep **humility** toward other people's faults

How do we really know when we are **judging and condemning someone?**

- I think we all know **how we feel** when we think someone is doing it to us
 - That feeling of disapproval
- In case you are confused:
 - **Someone pointing out something you are doing or believing that is clearly in contradiction to the teaching of the Bible is not judging you**
 - In that case you are already judged by Scripture

⁴ Oxford American Dictionary
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What is being forbidden here is not the legitimate exercise of judgment in courts or in church discipline or elsewhere, but **the tendency to criticize and find fault with others.**

- **The use of discernment is not being forbidden, but rather a critical attitude**
- Looking better by criticizing others as worse.

We cross the line from truth-telling to judging and condemning when we:

1. Think less of or treat people poorly because of how they do or do not behave or believe

Jesus treats us well and thinks well of us even while we are behaving and believing badly

- This is an essential component of understanding God and the Gospel
- Cf. Woman caught in adultery

This does not mean that God does not discern **right from wrong/truth from error**

In fact, it is because of His insistence of **right over wrong/truth against error** that the Gospel exists and is Good News

The Good News is that while we deserve to be treated poorly and punished severely we are loved and that love is demonstrated to and toward us

- Romans 5:8 (Cf. **Mt. 5:44-45** and **Luke 6:35**) (**treats us well**) (**does not negate justice**)
- Jeremiah 29:11 (**thinks well of us**)
For I know the **thoughts** that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. (NKJ) (**exilic context**)

★This is the Gospel (Good News!)★

- The world is sinful, God does not approve of it indiscriminately
- But God loves the world so He treats us kindly and (ultimately) forgives
- (Cf. repentance)

People that get the Gospel think and deal with other people best

People that do not get the Gospel do not deal well with other sinners (in a being consistent with God and the Gospel sort of way)

- Everything (for them) is on a merit/demerit system
- They view themselves and their self-worth according to how they perform
 - **So they view everyone else that way too**
- **They do not get that the Gospel is not 'You must do' but 'Jesus has done'**
 - **The whole point is that we have not performed well and God loves us and treats us well anyway**

These people have never truly grasped grace and so they do not give grace

- Instead, they **judge and condemn**
- Meaning: **They think poorly of people who do not behave or believe well (and may treat them badly)**

We cross the line from truth-telling to judging and condemning when we:

2. Attempt to hold people to, and punish people for violating, something less than God's rules and standards

People that don't get the Gospel always add rules to Christian living...

- Because they do not get grace and the Gospel, **they need rules to follow**
 - And they deal with others according to how they keep those rules
- **They make themselves the standard of holiness**

Precisely what Jesus is forbidding in our text is self-righteous and unmerciful condemnation based on human standards and human understanding.

When we think less of people or treat them differently because they do not measure up to our rules and standards (that we try to pass off as Christianity)—we are guilty

- We are guilty of playing God (blasphemy)

Romans 14:10,12,13

10 But you, **why do you judge your brother?** Or you again, why do you regard your brother **with contempt?** For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God...

12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

13 **Therefore let us not judge one another anymore**, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

Instead of worrying about other's failures, we need to worry about ourselves and how our behavior affects others

Only God is just and only God can ultimately judge

We cross the line from truth-telling to judging and condemning when we:

3. Make any negative decisions about people's motives

When we attempt to do so, we commit a sort of idolatry—playing God!

- God has reserved that right and ability for Himself!

1 Corinthians 4:4-5

3 ... I do not even examine myself.

4 For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. (Paul got the Gospel!!!)

5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness **and disclose the motives of men's hearts**; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

Think about what we all know is right and needed for someone to judge

- In our own legal system we expect that the judge and jury have all the information before they can make a correct judgment
 - **All the information is needed to judge correctly**
- When it comes to others, we never have all the information
 - **That is why only God can judge, only He is omniscient**

Any judgment we make about **people's motives** (in a way that causes us to condemn them)—**meaning sentence them in some way... disapprove of**

- Is incorrect, sinful, blasphemous
- Must be repented of
- We do this all the time...

James 4:11-12 (NLT)

11 Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. **If you criticize and judge each other**, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you.

12 **God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge.** He alone has the power to save or to destroy. **So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?**

But...

We do confront and deal with what is wrong... we condemn **what is wrong**, but not **who is wrong!**

- **"Father forgive them..."**
 - Jesus identified what was wrong (that is indispensable!)
 - We are not ignoring guilt or simply pretending the guilty to be innocent

"To be just is to condemn the fault and, because of the fault, to condemn the doer as well. To forgive is to **condemn the fault** but to **spare the doer**. That's what the forgiving God does."⁵

We are not letting people off the hook

- Jesus has gotten on the hook for them
- Not an affront to our sense of Justice
 - **Justice is realized for each person either at the cross (justification) or at the throne (judgment)—historic and prophetic**
 - Romans 12:17-19
 - 17 **Never pay back evil for evil to anyone Respect what is right in the sight of all men.**
 - 18 **If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**
 - 19 **Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.**

Luther said this in speaking about what our attitude ought to be toward those who offend us: He said Christians should, "**grieve more over the sin of their offenders than over the loss or offense to themselves. And they do this that they may recall those offenders from their sin rather than avenge the wrongs they themselves have suffered.**"⁶

The root of the problem is we love ourselves way more than we love others...

- That is only healed as we lay hold more and more of the Gospel
- It's the actual application of the Gospel—I'm saved... now what?
 - How do we apply the Gospel to relationships?

Those who have the opposite problem—they do not want to confront people about their sin

⁵ Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 141.

⁶ As quoted in Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 199.

- Say they “love the person too much to confront or hurt them”
- The truth they love themselves too much

2 Timothy 2:24-26

24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,
 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,
 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

You are willing to leave them in that state—you my friend... are blowing it.

And in both errors, **condemning people** for the failures and **failing to confront people** altogether you remove yourself from much of the blessings of God

1 Peter 3:8-9

8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;
 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; **for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.**

What is evident from our text (Luke 6) is that there are serious consequences to this:

Luke 6:37-38

A good measure. The scene is the purchasing of a commodity of some sort where the amount measured out is not short, skimpy, or even fair but a “good” measurement.

Pressed down. The grain in the measuring container is pressed down, so that all the spaces are filled and the container holds as much as possible.

Shaken together. The measuring container is shaken, so that the grain can fill every empty space.

Running over. The container is filled and on top is a rounded heap so great that it overflows the container.

Will be poured into your lap. The picture is of this measure now being poured in the individual’s “container,” which is the fold of his outer garment. Between the shoulders and the belt, this outer cloak would be loose and could form a kind of pocket into which this measurement could be poured.

For with the measure you use...

If we judge, condemn and withhold forgiveness—the same will happen to us!

- The implication seems to be that God will deal with us this way!
- Our behavior toward others (in some way) determines God's behavior toward us
- Cf. Matthew 5:12,14,15
 12 *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...*

14 *For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

15 *But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*

“God prefers to act in mercy, but he who wants to put another on trial invites God to put him on trial; he who condemns another for his failings invites God to condemn him for his own failings.”⁷

How do you prefer to act? In mercy... or do you try and condemn people all day long?

- Thinking less of people who fail, imposing false standards, judging motives...

⁷ John Nolland, Word Biblical Commentary, 301
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