

September 5, 2021

"But I tell you..."

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you..." Matthew 7:1-3

Of everything that the Master teaches in his 'Sermon on the Mount', this one statement has probably been the source of more conflict than any of his other teachings. The first part of this passage is quoted again and again by those who are feeling unfairly condemned while few of us really ponder the rest of Jesus' message.

First, we need to understand that, in this as in all commands, Jesus is setting the rule for our personal choices. My Lord is commanding me personally not to judge others and he is warning me that the measure of condemning judgment I use on others will be used on me when I face the Father in heaven. If I want the Father's mercy and compassion then I must extend mercy and compassion to others.

It is also essential to understand, I think, that Jesus is addressing our tendency to usurp God's role in thinking we have the power to decide who goes to heaven and who doesn't. There is a major difference between believing that I can eternally condemn a person and condemning what another person might be choosing to do.

It is not now nor will it ever be my responsibility to judge another person in terms of their eternal outcome. Paul would write, ***"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls."*** (Romans 14:1-4) Other people are not mine to judge in regards to their eternal outcome. They do not belong to me. We all, individually, belong to God and God alone will make the eternal judgment about each and every one of us individually. I am not the judge. God is.

That does not mean that I cannot and should not make judgments about wrong actions. If I see someone stealing a car Jesus is not commanding me to look the other way because I can't make the judgment that such an action is wrong. I can and should decide that stealing a car is a wrong action and I should absolutely call the police.

However, I cannot and should not think for a moment that I have the power to make any judgments about the car thief's eternal life. Those judgments do not belong to me. Those judgments belong absolutely and only to the God of heaven.

So, how do we even begin to make this distinction and how do we constantly filter our judgments through merciful compassion? Jesus would tell us to address our own personal case of 'logitis' before we even think about correcting someone else. The Apostle Paul would write, ***"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things."*** (Romans 2:1)

My God and Father has given me power over my own choices and he will hold me accountable for the choices I make. I make wrong choices every day and I need to address those issues in my own life. The treatment for my own personal 'logitis' will require nearly all my energy as I focus on cleaning up my own messes. Trying to clean up the wrongs in someone else's life is really beyond my capacity.

So, when I see someone doing something that I think they shouldn't be doing how should I react? Pointing fingers and assigning blame will change nothing. Is it wrong to steal? Absolutely! Is it my task in life to decide the thief's eternal outcome? Absolutely not!

If I would change the world then I must first begin by changing myself. If it is wrong to steal then I must make sure I am not stealing. If it is wrong to....then I must make sure I am not... Change must always begin with me!

Counting other people's
sins
does not make you
a saint