

November 8, 2015

## ***What Would Jesus Do?***

So far in our this series we have come to understand, I hope, that Jesus responded with compassion and mercy to those who were struggling and that he was able to do this so effectively because he had first humbled himself. In studying the life of Jesus there are many things that stand out in the way he behaved toward others. One thing that I have noticed in considering our question is that Jesus almost never sets himself up as the "behavior policeman."

In fact he said of himself, ***"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. As for the person who hears my words, but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it."*** (John 12:44-50) So, we see Jesus teaching about the way we should live and then the choice to live that way or not is left up to us.

I am convinced that this attitude is one of the characteristics of our Lord that allowed him to respond with mercy and compassion so well. If we are able to overcome our tendency toward the judgement and condemnation of others as he was I am convinced we would find it far easier to be merciful and compassionate.

Jesus teaches us, ***"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 7:1-2) I am convinced that this attitude is a key component of being able to show mercy and compassion to those around us. If Jesus did not come to be the "behavior police" then he did not call us to become the "behavior police" either. That doesn't mean that you and I are not called to be honest in our teaching about what God expects of us. We are in this world to teach about right and wrong and about grace and redemption, but it is not our job to force others to obey. If there is any single challenge to us in modern Christianity it is this tendency; to believe that someone who chooses not to believe in Jesus and to follow him must be forced to do so.

For example, Jesus teaches us clearly that hating even our enemies is wrong. He says, ***"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."*** (Matthew 5:43-44) I need to teach this truth from Jesus and more importantly, I need to live this truth just as he did. However, it is not my job to make you live this truth. If I teach the truth about what Jesus says about hating and you choose to do it anyway then that is your choice. I am not the "behavior police", but I am absolutely responsible for my own behavior choices.

Thus, in teaching us about judging others the Master gives us this simple rule. ***"...first, take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see more clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*** (Matthew 7:3-5) The truth of Jesus' teaching is that we will very likely spend the rest of our lives trying to "remove our planks" and so we will never really be qualified to be "speck removers".

So, when I am faced with the poor is it my job to correct them or to feed them, clothe them and house them? When I am confronted with sinners is it my task to condemn them or to show them mercy? These choices are, I think, much easier to make when I approach them through the reality of my own spiritual condition.



My task on this earth is clear, I believe. I have not been saved by his grace so that I can condemn others, but so that I can show them his mercy and his compassion.