

Doing the Unthinkable

Reading: Matthew 7:1-15

- We finished our last class talking about Forgiveness from the Lord's Prayer
- The Lord's Prayer shows us a direct connection between our attitude towards forgiving others, and God's attitude about forgiving us
- *Forgive us our debts **as we also have forgiven our debtors***
- The Lord's prayer shows us that we need daily forgiveness just as much as we need daily bread
- Jesus seems to take two things for granted in the Lord's prayer:
 - 1) That people will hurt us and we will need to forgive them
 - 2 That we ourselves will hurt others and will need to be forgiven
- It's our responsibility to connect those two things together in our heads, and realize that if we want forgiveness from God, we have to give it to our Brother
- Whether the person hurt us on purpose, or it was just them being insensitive, we Need to learn to forgive them
- It is important for us to learn this lesson...
- Jesus tells us, "*If you do not forgive men their sins, **your Father will not forgive your sins***"
- Trust me... You can go your whole life without learning that lesson
- But, you don't want to

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- Today we're going to talk about **Judging**
- Remember how I said that one of the first steps to being able to forgive is to realize that God is a God of Vengeance
- You have to realize that it's not your job to punish the other person for what they've done to you
- God is a God of Vengeance, and He will take care of them
- Integral to believing this, is believing that **God is the Judge**
- It makes sense
- If God is responsible for Punishment, shouldn't He also be responsible to Judge
- It follows then, that **you are not responsible to Judge People**
- I think that is why Jesus tells us in Matthew 7,

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- Matthew 7:1
 - 1) *"Judge not, that you be not judged."*
- This verse, and this phrase, "Judge not" is one of the most popular Bible verses in our society today, **especially** among non-Christians
- It fits in with two of our society's most basic assumptions
 - (1) Religion is Private
 - (2) Morality is Relative
- People love the idea of "judge not" because it seems to be a handy way of saying, ***"You can't tell me I'm wrong"***

- Begin to make a public assessment on just about any moral issue and you'll see this phrase swiftly pulled out as a defensive weapon
- The problem is, Jesus - the one who uttered the words in the first place - didn't share our society's presuppositions about private religion and relative morality
- He was constantly making public judgments, many of them rather striking
- Look what he tells his Disciples in John 7

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- John 7:6-7
 - 6) Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.
 - 7) The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because **I testify about it that its works are evil.**
- Many people hated Jesus because he was often quite frank in his assessment of whether or not he thought they were living a righteous life
- So Jesus couldn't have meant that we're all supposed to just throw up our hands and say, **"Hey, to each his own. Who am I to judge?"**
- What does it mean to Judge someone?
- Jesus' command that we not judge others doesn't mean that we can't show discernment
- Shortly after saying, "Judge not" in Matthew 7:1, Jesus continues by saying,

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- Matthew 7:6
 - 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.
- Hmm... Wouldn't this requiring us figuring out who are dogs and who are pigs?

- And... Further down in Verse 15 he continues...

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- Matthew 7:15

15) Beware of **false prophets**, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

- Jesus seems to expect us to have the ability make a judgment call on someone's doctrines and deeds
- Jesus expects us to be able to tell Right from Wrong, to be able to determine whether or not someone's beliefs and actions are fitting our high calling

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- You judge someone **NOT** when you **assess their position**, but when you **dismiss them as a person**
- That is what people find offensive, and that is what Jesus doesn't want us to do
- To simply 'write off' people because we determine that they don't fit in our mold of what we think a follower of Christ should be is Judging and it is wrong
- There is a difference between speaking a harsh truth in love and condemning
- Condemning goes beyond saying "This is wrong" to saying, "I don't want you around me anymore."
- Jesus is not telling us to ignore what is wrong
- Jesus isn't denying the reality that there are going to be times in Ecclesial life where you are called upon to discern wrong behavior from right
- When Jesus says, **"Do not judge,"** I think that he is just telling us not to disregard the Brother that he died for and is trying to save
- With a simple word we can easily dismiss someone, hurt someone, judge someone

- There is a great old acronym that is a helpful reminder when you are speaking about someone else

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- Before you say something about someone, ask yourself if you **NEED** to:

Necessary - *Is it necessary that I say this? Is it important that I impart this knowledge to the person I'm talking to, or do I just want to spread the news?*

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Encourage - *Will this encourage the person? Will it make them feel better? Will they feel better about their Brother or Sister, and the Ecclesia in general?*

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Edify - *Does this edify? Will what I say build them up and make them stronger? Or, will it cause them to shake their head...*

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Dignify - *Will this dignify the person? Jesus treated others with dignity. We should treat others the same way that Jesus did.*

- Criticism that is unfair or unjust - **EVEN IF IT'S TRUE** – just shouldn't be said
- The fact that what you say is **TRUE** doesn't make it **NECESSARY** to say
- That's the part that trips us up often
- If we are simply relaying information that is not a lie, but is the truth about someone else, we don't really feel like we are gossiping or judging them
- That might be a reasonable judgment to make, and you might even be right
- But, is it healthy?
- Judging others is almost always counterproductive

- Often when you judge someone you might be thinking, *"What I want to do is change this person"*
- You want to have an positive effect on them
- You want this to be a learning moment, and for them to improve
- But, it has the opposite effect every time!
- Sooner or later the person will become offended, and you haven't really accomplished anything
- Being judged is painful, whether or not the accusation is true
- It hurts the person, and ultimately it hurts your relationship with them
- If that isn't enough reason for us, Jesus has given us a pragmatic reason not to judge...

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- Matthew 7:1-2
 - 1) Judge not, that you be not judged.
 - 2) For **with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged**, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.
- If you don't like being judged yourself, then stop judging other people!
- The verse is clear, and it's really quite scary!
- It is **EASY** to criticize
- Sometimes we think that we are spiritual enough to see that what others are doing is wrong – and then we point the finger at them
- The true test of spiritual maturity is not pointing the finger!
- You might say, *"Well, I have to say something, or no one else will! We have to stand up for the truth! We have to keep our light stand pure!"*

- **So what if no one else says anything?**

- The person you are judging isn't really listening anyway
- They aren't going to hear it
- You are not really helping
- You are not contributing to a positive change
- You are instead pushing someone further away from God
- When people are judged they usually feel worse, but they don't change their behavior
- God is much more practical than this:

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- Isaiah 58:9-10

- 9) Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' **If you take away** the yoke from your midst, **the pointing of the finger**, and speaking wickedness,
- 10) if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.

- Don't point the finger and gossip
- But instead be generous with the "hungry"
- Then your life will be blessed
- But, how do we tell when we are Judging?
- The concern is that we are so poorly developed that we can't even recognize when we are Judging
- Here are six signs that you're Judging others:

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- 1) You are more **enraged** at someone else's sin than you are **embarrassed** by your own

 - Oddly, one of the first signs of Christian maturity is a frustration with the hypocrisy of the church and a desire to separate from it
 - But, thankfully, the next sign of spiritual growth is recognizing that the same hypocrisy in the church is present in oneself
 - We continue to confront others in their sin, but always while being painfully aware of our own

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- 2) You **refuse** to forgive

 - To refuse to forgive someone is to be almost entirely ignorant of the enormity of what God has forgiven you
 - And to "forgive but not forget" is, as people say, is just another way of saying, "I'm going to remind you of this all the time and use it as justification for being cold toward you"
 - In other words, it's not forgiveness at all
 - Forgiveness means absorbing the debt and offering love and goodness in return

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- 3) You **"Cut Off"** those who disagree with you

 - Whether this is done at the Ecclesia level with Dis-Fellowship, or just the personal level with purposeful social non-interaction, they are both warning signs
 - This is the essence of judging
 - When you disagree strongly with someone - over a Doctrinal or Moral Point - and because you can't agree you cut them off, you are saying, in essence, "We can't really be friends if we disagree on this issue"

- The ultimate statement of Judgment is, “Depart from me”
- I’ve come to learn that the true test of Fellowship is loving someone despite your Differences
- If you only Fellowship people that you agree with, then where is the Glory to God in that?
- So, God worked years and years with you to simply develop an innate, natural sense of Social Affinity? **No!**

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- Matthew 5:46

46) For if you **only love those who love you**, what reward do you have? Do not even sinners do the same?

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- Fellowship literally means **“to come alongside someone”**
- It doesn’t give a sense of you “standing firm” and just welcoming those who join you
- It clearly gives a sense of you going out of your way, moving outside of your Comfort Zone and coming alongside someone on their journey
- So, listen to what I have to say next with lots of Love:

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- **You have to love your Brother more than you love your position on a particular issue**
- That doesn’t mean that you throw the Statement of Faith out the window
- That doesn’t mean you ever compromise your position or fail to state it
- But it means that you stay committed to loving those who passionately disagree with you

- Remember: Jesus broke bread with Judas!
- And, even after Judas had betrayed him, look at what Jesus says,

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- Matthew 26:50

50) Jesus said to him, "**Friend**, do what you came to do."

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- So, a good sign that you have fallen to the temptation of Judging, is when you find yourself cutting off people who disagree with you

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4) You **gossip**

- What makes gossip so dangerous is that you are judging someone without giving them the chance to change
- At least if you called someone out to their face, they could do something about it

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5) You refuse to receive **criticism**

- Why do you hate criticism?
- Isn't it because you hate to admit that you have faults?
- But if you understand the gospel, that shouldn't surprise you
- So when others point out your shortcomings, you should be able to say, "Well, of course. In fact, I could tell you a thing or two you didn't notice!"

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6) You write someone off as **hopeless**

- Remember, we serve a Savior who raises the dead
- It shouldn't phase us one bit if we think that someone is hopeless
- We are all just as hopeless
- So if we keep our mouths shut, and don't share our hope with someone because we think that they are beyond hope then we're saying that we have judged them, and we think that they are too sinful for even Christ to save

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- If we are foolish enough to judge, we should remember three things:
 - 1) God is **listening**
- God knows when we judge others

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- 2) God **knows the truth** about you
- There's no fooling God, he knows your deepest secrets

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- 3) God is ruthlessly **fair**
- "Fair" seems like such a nice word
 - But, do you really want to be treated "fairly"?
 - Remember that as you begin to say something unfairly critical of your Brother
 - But, also remember that God is not out to judge us!
 - God wants to forgive us and extend his mercy to us
 - But, we have to show an attitude that desires mercy
 - We have to not be critical of others

- Do you feel like you are overly critical of others?
- I know that I do
- I love a good laugh, and enjoy making fun... *of others...*
- A lot of humor is often at the expense of others
- Besides that I'm a perfectionist, and I'm demanding in my relationships
- I'm just a very critical person
- Like me, you can change
- You can learn to not be so critical of others
- Pray to God for help and He will change you
- Now there are some times when it is **RIGHT** for us to Judge
- It is never RIGHT to Write Off our Brother as hopeless, but sometimes the Brother of Christ is called to make a righteous decision about a moral matter - In many people's eyes this is Judging
- Let's look again at what Jesus says in Matthew 7

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- Matthew 7:3-5
 - 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?
 - 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?
 - 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**.
- When Jesus says to "*first remove the log from your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your Brother's eye*", he is not denying that there will be times when we need to remove the speck from our Brother's eye - He is just warning us to be careful when we do

- As we've discussed, sometimes it is absolutely right to warn others about someone's behavior
- The Apostle John is often referred as the "Love Apostle", because he so frequently is the one who says that *"Love is all you need"*
- But, look what he has to say in 3rd John 9

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- 3rd John 9-10:
 - 9) I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.
 - 10) So if I come, **I will bring up what he is doing**, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.
- Paul was also not afraid to **"call a spade a spade"**
- This Brother was not only refusing to fellowship other Brothers and Sisters, but was also dis-fellowshipping those who did
- John rightly "judged" this as completely wrong, and wasn't afraid to confront the Brother about it
- Look at what Paul tells Timothy in 2nd Timothy 4

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- 2nd Timothy 4:10 & 14
 - 10) For Demas, **in love with this present world**, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.
 - 14) Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; **the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.**
- It is an injustice when someone who has done harm and can still do great harm to others is at large

- But, there are some basic principles that must be followed when making this type of judgment

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- Matthew 7:3

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?”

- This verse points out our tendency to get upset over small issues in another person’s life, and yet so easily overlook the big issues in our own lives
- This lack of objectivity disqualifies us from being helpful
- When we lose our objectivity, we render ourselves incapable of passing judgment
- What we learn from Matthew 7 is it’s not about what “*gets our goat*”
- It’s not about what upsets us, annoys us, or irritates us
- The Log that is in your eye simultaneously blinds you to your own faults, and magnifies the minor faults of others
- Sometimes Ecclesias find themselves with “*Professional Speck Hunters*”
- People who get fulfillment by bringing up every little thing that others are doing that is not ideal
- Often they do so because it makes the things that they are doing seem not as bad
- It’s important to show love and respect to these people, without reacting too strongly to what they are complaining about
- Judge based on the merit of the complaint, not the reputation of the complainer
- What if you are the one with the speck being attacked by someone with a Log?
- What is someone is finding fault with you, and meddling in your life?
- First, God calls us to maintain a sweet spirit during these times

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- Proverbs 15:1

1) **A soft answer turns away wrath**, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

- Second, we are to agree with them!
- Even though they might have a Log in their own eye, they are pointing to a real, honest, existing speck that is in our eye
- You can always find a little bit of truth in what a critic will say about you
- Even if you can't find a way to agree, you can always say, *"I see what you mean"*
- Third, we should thank the person
- This will not only diffuse their irritation, but it will also enable them to save face if they are up to no good
- In addition, we will avoid making an enemy in the process
- What you shouldn't do when confronted is try to defend yourself
- Remember, this is at best, just a little speck in your life - It's not that important!
- Don't fight over it, just thank them for pointing it out, and ask them to pray for you
- Don't you honestly feel that you *"need all the help you can get"*?
- What Jesus is telling us is that if you are able to remove the Log from your own eye, then you are set free to remove the speck from your Brother's eye
- If you can retain the objectivity that comes from not being influenced by sin, then you are able to judge your Brother
- Be careful here!
- Usually, the first person who claims that they are qualified to be a judge is the person who has absolutely no objectivity about themselves

- We need to proceed carefully, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't proceed...
- Notice how Jesus doesn't say that every single Log in your eye needs to be removed before you can make righteous judgments
- No one is sinless - Everyone has faults
- The real question we are trying to address today is trying to make sure that the faults that you do have do not affect your ability to judge in the matter under discussion
- But, judgments HAVE to be made, and someone has to make them
- We all face unjust situations every day
- How long are we to tolerate wrongdoing?
- Sometimes, you just HAVE to say something
- But, who is bold enough to say that they don't have a Log in their eye?
- Jeremiah says that *"the heart is deceitful above all things. Who can understand it?"*
- Paul says in Romans 7 that *"nothing good lives in him"*
- Paul continues in 1st Timothy by saying that *"Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst"*
- So, how can imperfect people judge other imperfect people?
- We have to understand that we do not have to be perfect in order to judge
- It is possible to remove your Log in a limited way

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- Galatians 6:1
 - 1) Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should **restore him in a spirit of gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

- Let's say that I find out that a Brother in our meeting has fallen to the sin of drunkenness
- I specifically have facts regarding this
- No one whispered it to me, I have witnessed it myself
- No one else knows as far as I know, it's a burden for me to carry
- Am I qualified to approach him about his sin?
- In an absolute sense, NO, because I am a sinner as well
- I fully realize that I could fall to the same type of sin
- But, because I am not struggling with alcoholism myself, then I have, in that particular area, removed the Log from my own eye
- The reason I am qualified to help is because I am not trying to find fault with him
- I may not necessarily turn him around, but hopefully he will not resent my coming to him
- Look at Galatians 6 again...
- Galatians 6:1
 - 1) Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should **restore him in a spirit of gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.
- You have to approach these issues with a spirit of humility and self-searching
- Your mission of attempting to actually help your Brother depart from his sin will never be successful if you approach it thinking that you are "above" him and his sin
- Only if you are able to walk alongside the sinner, will you ever be able to provide any type of guidance or counsel

- Now, the tricky part is when you are approaching a Brother or Sister about a sin that is not as clear cut as my example of Drunkenness...
- That is why you don't go trying to take SPECKS out of people's eyes...
- Would any of us feel right approaching someone about the sin of gossip? Lying? Laziness?
- Do you really think that you can sit there and say, "You should never gossip"?
- Make sure that it really is a Log in their eye, and only a few specks in your own
- A good rule of them to follow is: The one who is hardest on himself will probably be the gentlest with others
- Those who are most acutely aware of their own weaknesses are most likely able to help
- There is a natural inclination to be hard on others...
- One of my favorite verses is:

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- Colossians 2:20-23

- 20) If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—
- 21) "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"

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- 22) (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?
 - 23) These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but **they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.**
- It's one of my favorite verses because it points out the natural inclination to make lots of rules for ourselves in an effort to control our sinful desires...

- And how it **DOESN'T WORK!**
- The only way to face the challenge of your sinfulness is to acknowledge your weakness and turn to God for strength and forgiveness
- Now, read that last verse again, and think of the same lesson in relation to the body of Christ

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- Colossians 2:23

23) These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and **severity** to the **body**, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

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- Being **SEVERE** with your Brothers and Sisters will really have **no value in helping them battle their sins**

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- It's a **natural reaction** to want to **set rules** and **restrict people**, but it really doesn't help them in their walk
- The one who doesn't moralize, but encourages others to become more like Christ is the one most qualified to engage in restoration and reconciliation
- A qualified person will avoid becoming emotionally involved in the situation
- A qualified person has no personal ax to grind
- A qualified person can only help if they truly care for the other person - You cannot help if you are irritated or annoyed by them
- Usually, a person therefore who is not personally connect to the situation is the best one to help
- Jesus doesn't tell us how to remove the Logs from our own eyes... Maybe because it is impossible to do so in the absolute sense

- But paying accurate attention to your own faults will help us keep from pointing the finger at others or meddling where we don't belong
- Brothers and Sisters CAN and ARE restored by gentle correction or confrontation
- But, Brothers and Sisters are often destroyed by botched confrontation and accusation
- If you see someone drowning in their sin, then you are called to try to save their lives
- And if you take it upon yourself to be the one to visit them, do so in a caring and humble manner

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- There is a balance here between **Grace** and **Truth**

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- **Truth** without **Grace** is **Judgmental Fundamentalism**

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- **Grace** without **Truth** is **Liberal Sentimentality**

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- Our **Goal** is to combine them **Both**