

The Judge Judged in our place

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Would you remain standing for the reading of God's Word? Turn your Bibles or your bulletins to Matthew chapter 7.
- Matthew chapter 7, we'll start in verse 1. This is God's Word. Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged.
- And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 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?
- Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is a log in your own eye? 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.
- This is God's Word. Please be seated. Do you pray with me? Father in heaven, we have come into your house expecting you, and we know that you are here.
- [1 : 0 8] You've been with us as we sing, as we give, as we greet one another, doing spiritual things in our midst. And we pray now that as we look at your Word, that you would not stop, but that you would all the more through the power of your Spirit work in our hearts, in our church, in our families, in our marriages, that you would be glorified, and that Christ would be big and beautiful.
- It's in his name that we pray. Amen. Just a quick introduction. My name is Jonathan Clark. I'm a local pastor here in Colorado Springs. I grew up here in Colorado Springs.
- I've been away for a while, but I just recently moved back in April with my family. I'm married to Caroline. She's an artist in town, and we have a little girl that God's entrusted to us.
- She's three. And so they're worshiping at another church for consistency for my daughter's sake. But I'm here occasionally. If this is your first time, I'm not normally here at Cheyenne Mountain, but I come occasionally, so you'll see me around.
- If you have been around a while, then you've probably known me for a shorter or longer time. I serve as a campus pastor with an organization called Reformed University Fellowship. It's the campus ministry wing of our Presbyterian tradition.
- [2 : 1 8] So I'm at UCCS, but also looking at other colleges around Colorado Springs. And so it's great to be with you today on this Lord's Day to open up the Bible and ponder it with you.
- So I was this week... ..on the Internet. You know, I spend a lot of time on the Internet as I'm hanging around with college students trying to discern and hear what they're thinking.
- And I saw a video. This video was of someone who double parked their car, right? We've all seen it. Somebody who takes up more lanes than they're supposed to. And somebody else looks at this and says, well, this is unjust.
- And so they're criticizing it, right? And very quickly, the whole episode in the video explodes from two people ignoring each other to all of a sudden, two complete strangers absolutely yelling at each other.

And you've probably seen something like this. One person is mocking the other person. One person is saying, stay out of my business. You don't understand, right? And there's another person who's recording, live streaming the whole situation, right?

[3 : 20] And they're watching the whole thing. They're watching this scene take place, right? And so the person who double parked is feeling wrongly judged. And the critic is feeling the need to judge, to assess at the very least.

And it's escalating. And both are feeling superior. Both are feeling vindicated in their position. And I'm sure that, you know, many of us are thinking, well, you know, this would never happen, right?

Maybe you've seen a video like this. Maybe you haven't. But you know, there was another person who was at work in this. And it was me who's watching the video saying, well, I would never, I would never get caught up in this situation.

Look at these two fools yelling at each other in a parking lot, right? Thinking, oh man, I would never, ever be caught in a situation of yelling at a total stranger, right?

And so lots of criticism at the very least at its very worst, the word that Jesus asks us to focus on today, judgment is happening in this moment. One person is judging another parker.

[4 : 22] The parker is judging the recorder and then I'm judging the whole situation, right? Well, as my black pastor in seminary would say to this whole situation, Jesus has a word for us.

If you found yourself like this, and it's a sharp word and it's a generous action, right? Jesus today commands us not to judge other humans, but in so doing, he saves judging hypocrites by becoming judged for them.

Jesus commands us not to judge, but then he saves judging hypocrites, right? So look down at your text, if you will, and you look at verse one. Jesus is in the middle of his Sermon on the Mount, which is Jesus' great exposition and teaching on the law.

And he's telling how the Old Testament law continues to have relevance for the life of the Christian today, right? And how the standard of holiness is not lowered by Christ's coming, but is actually elevated, strikes to the very core of our hearts, and pervades all of our society, right?

And he says here, he says in these striking words right from the get-go, judge not that you be not judged, right? For with the judgment you pronounce, you will have measured against you, right?

[5 : 40] Well, what's going on here? What does Jesus mean? Well, honestly, it's pretty straightforward. Jesus is not necessarily saying anything that's too hard for us to understand.

Jesus is saying here that no human being, no person has the right or the responsibility or even the ability to judge, jury, and be executioner for another human being, right?

That no person has that responsibility. No person has the right to declare the final verdict for another human being, right? That is alone God's role.

It is God's right to condemn. It is God's right to not condemn, right? And if you think about the opposite of this, in Romans 4, Paul says that Abraham is reckoned or counted as righteous.

And that word that Paul uses is the Greek word for *logizomai*, which means to declare something is true, to declare that Paul or Abraham is righteous by faith.

[6 : 42] This is the opposite of what is happening here. This judging is to declare unrighteous. Unrighteous. To judge, even to the very core of who a human being is, right?

And so here, judging is snatching from God the right and responsibility of final condemnation. And in a sense, then, it's to pretend to be God for a moment.

For a brief moment in time to say, I know this world and this person and this universe well enough to declare this person's status, right? It goes beyond what a person does or believes or says and strikes to the core of this person, right?

And so if we sit in what's actually happening here, we are quickly, throughout the book of Matthew, placed with sort of the archetype, the stereotype of this judgment, and it is the Pharisees, right? Jesus is constantly lambasting, attacking, saying that you are the worst example of this judgmental spirit.

Here are men who are so quick to assess the spiritual status and social value, compare it to their own, and then say, you are wanting, spiritually, socially, in every way, that the Pharisees were some of the most vindictive and judgmental people in Jesus' society, right?

[8 : 00] To make a snap judgment, to look at a person and say, you can never be holy like we are. Oh, you are spiritually inferior to me. They would say things like, oh, Lord, I am so thankful that I am not like this tax collector.

Or to Jesus, Jesus, do you know who you are eating with? What kind of a person this is? What they have done? Does Jesus know? They claimed to do often what only God can do and deliver the final verdict over a person's dignity, value, and status.

Now, what does this have to do? How does this apply to our day, right? Well, I shouldn't have to spend too much time because we all know this is true, that we live in one of the most vindictive, judgmental times in all of society, right?

That 21st century America is full of this judgmental spirit. Think about with me of a non-religious context, perhaps a secular context.

Think with me about the reality, the phenomenon that we know today is cancel culture, right? What is cancel culture? Well, it's the ability for a group or a person to eliminate a person's social standing almost immediately, right?

[9 : 16] Cancel culture is when a person or a group can shun, shame, fire, derail a career of a person almost overnight for any little thing, right?

Cancel culture or call-out culture is a giant social exercise in this judgment to say you have no role in our society anymore. You are done for, condemning a person to social and even career death, right?

And we've all seen examples of this where a tweet, a very old tweet possibly or a new tweet can become unearthed and immediately this person's career is if not eliminated, set back decades and they have to go into hiding, it seems, right?

Right? And this happens everywhere from junior high schools, middle schools to A-list actors, right? This is the kind of judgment that our world lives in, right? But consider it's not just the non-Christian world where this sort of thing happens, right?

It happens as much in the religious world or in the Christian church, right? So I hang out with college students a good bit of my time and I hang out with students who are not Christians, not walking with the Lord, unchurched or de-churched.

[10 : 24] And what is the number one complaint both that I hear anecdotally and the research says about Christians, right? The number one reasons why someone would say I'm not going to church with you or I will not come to a faith event.

They say Christians are what? Judgmental hypocrites, right? They look at the church and they say you say one thing but you do another or I walk in the door and I immediately feel judged, right?

And now whether or not there's validity to that is a different question but it's true that we live in churches, we live in marriages and families that can be incredibly judgmental places.

And it might be tempting for us to say well that's the secular cancel culture or no that's the fundamentalist church. But like when you stick a magnifying in the sun and let it burn a little bit until it gets hot, I want to let the magnifying words of Jesus to sit on our hearts until we squirm under the gaze of Jesus' words, judge not.

A few weeks ago I went to Estes Park, Colorado which is a big old tourist destination if you've gone into the mountains at all. And I was walking around Estes Park on a busy weekend afternoon and I was thinking about this text and I was astonished at how quickly I could look around me in Estes Park and assess, nay, judge the people around me, right?

[11 : 48] I would judge the people who were in mountain yuppies, right? Oh, look at those granola hippies here. And then I would look at the Texas tourists for ruining my Colorado mountains, right?

How I was perfectly capable of judging the Florida license plate for how they drove the mountain roads, right? How I was perfectly capable to judge someone for what clothes they wore in the mountains, right?

Incredible how our hearts are so capable of this, right? From parking jobs to a person's politics, from their sitcom taste to their sexuality, to declare a verdict about someone's value and even their eternal status, right?

And I think if you're honest with yourself, if you sit in this, you start to see, oh my goodness, I am the one that Jesus is talking to, right? Because Jesus' words here challenge and alarm us with the possibility that I am the judgmental one that Jesus is speaking to, right?

I'm rereading currently The Lord of the Rings, which is J.R.R. Tolkien's just epic narrative about the finding and destruction of the one ring. And Gandalf, who is the wizard, the kind of the spiritual father, shepherd for this whole saga, is telling Frodo, who is the one who has found the one ring and it must destroy it.

[13 : 09] He's telling the story of how the ring has passed from Sauron, the great evil dictator of the universe, to Gollum, the sniveling, griping worm of a creature, and then how it passes to Frodo, right?

And he's talking about how the Gollum, when he finds the ring, it slowly corrodes and corrupts his soul, right? And Frodo is disgusted by this, and he declares that Gollum is loathsome.

And you're imprinted in your text as Gandalf's next word in your bulletin. Gandalf says, I think it is a sad story, and it could have happened to others, even to some hobbits I know.

And Tolkien hits something right there to say, don't be so quick to judge Gollum, Frodo. You are just as capable of the same corrosion and destruction that Gollum is.

And as the story continues, we see that that happens to Frodo gradually, to where he eventually claims the ring as his own, right? That Frodo is perfectly capable of the same corruption, and therefore has no standing to judge the creature Gollum.

[14 : 19] Try this on. When we go to a grocery store, this is some of the, go to a grocery store that you don't normally go to. I went to the Walmart last week on Platt. I'm not normally at that grocery store.

And I saw a pig's head, literally a head of a pig, and I thought, who buys that? And I found myself incredibly judgmental of the people who are in that Walmart, right?

You'll be astonished when you go to a different grocery store how quickly you can size up another human being, stereotype them, judge them for wearing clothes too expensive or not expensive enough.

Judge them by what's in their cart or by what's not in their cart. Outside of a store, we assess people by how little they're on social media or how much they're on social media, by how woke they are or how anti-woke they are, by how they think about politics and race, little things, big things.

We are a world and a society that is subconscious, constantly, impulsively judgmental, right? Dr. Adam Moore, he's a psychology professor on social judgment thought at the University of Edinburgh, did several clinical studies on this phenomenon.

[15 : 33] He says this, he says profound words, he says, we enjoy that feeling of moral superiority and the feeling that we are a good person or the one in the right. It feels great to be in that self-righteous place where you stand on your pedestal and look down on others, but he says, it is not healthy.

So why is this judging so easy for us? Well, this non-Christian professor put the nail on the head. Self-righteousness, this self-righteous impulse that is at work in all of us and the Bible has a word for that.

Sin. It is sin that all of us are this judgmental, knee-flexed, subconscious condemnation, right? And sin brings judgment, the Bible tells us, right?

Listen to what Jesus says, judge not that you be not judged. Verse two, for what, with the judgment you pronounce, it will be, you will be judged.

And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. The standard that you and I use to assess and ultimately condemn another human being, Jesus says, will be meted out back to you.

[16 : 48] You will be judged. That's in the passive voice, which whenever there's a passive voice in the Bible, often that is, that God is the active agent behind that. God will judge us based on how you judge others, right?

God assesses us based on our own standards, right? Martin Lloyd-Jones, who's an old British preacher, writes a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount and he says of these two verses, Matthew 7, 1 and 2, that they are some of the most alarming and indicting verses in the whole Bible.

And the longer you sit in it, the longer it hounds us. It condemns us because we are a self-righteous, judgmental people, right? And Jesus has a word for this.

If you skip down to verse 5, you hypocrites, all of us, Christians, non-Christians, conservatives, liberals, man, woman, child, old, all of us are the kind of people who are guilty of the vices and the sins that we judge in others.

And this hypocrisy has the root of self-righteousness, of sinful condemnation and error, right?

[17 : 57] It's the Pharisees' error and it's our errors, right? And we should feel the sting of it because we are all sinners. And this leads us to this broken place of saying, what hope is there for a person like me, a judgmental sinner?

We are all condemned to be judged by each other and ultimately judged by the living God. And when we find ourselves in this place, we must return, friends, to the very core, the heartbeat of the Christian message, the gospel.

And it is this, that God is a great Savior who saves judgmental sinners like you and like me. That the whole mission of the Christ who comes to earth is to deliver us from this mess of judgmentalism that we have created from ourselves.

The message of the gospel, the heart of the Christian good news is even though you and I are judgmental hypocrites, Christ died to save us from judgment, our own and ultimately His, right?

This is what the Bible says. Yes, I am the judging one and God does not judge me but places another one to be judged in my place.

[19 : 17] If you have a Bible, turn to Matthew chapter 26. Scroll ahead a couple of chapters and Matthew 26 is when Jesus has done His ministry, His time has come, He has been arrested, He's now on trial, He's innocent of the charges but He's on a trumped up trial for charges of blasphemy.

He claims that He is God which was a punishable offense by death. Now He is God so it's a false trial but if it turns out to be true then He deserves to die, right?

And so look with me at Matthew 26, verse 65. The high priest is interrogating Jesus and it says, then the high priest tore his robes and said, He has uttered blasphemy.

What further witnesses do we need? You have heard His blasphemy. Look at verse 66. What is your judgment? And they answered, He deserves death.

The council and the people cry out, kill, judge, condemn, destroy this man. Karl Barth who is an amazing scholar of the Bible.

[20 : 27] He's not right on everything. He's not right on everything but he hits the nail on the head with this. This is a bit of a wordy quote but it's beautiful. It's written in your bulletin. He writes this, Those who are to be judged are given space and freedom and power to judge.

The judge allows himself to be judged. The punishment falls on the very one on whom it ought to fall least of all and not at all on those on whom it ought to fall.

Jesus, the judge, the righteous one who never wrongly judged places himself in the position of being judged, condemned, and destroyed by sinful hypocrites, Pharisees.

He is judged by them even to death even though he has done nothing wrong to be judged. And friends, if that is true 2,000 years ago, it is still true for us today as Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

Jesus, with the most authority, the most authorization to judge and condemn us says, No, I will not judge but I will be judged in their place. The judgment that we deserve falls on him.

[21 : 46] the one who can only rightly judge does not exercise it but is gracious, merciful, kind, and generous to you and to me.

Judgmental hypocrites, right? The only non-hypocrite in the history of the world suffered and died the judgmental hypocrite's fate so that hypocrites like you and I would escape judgment.

That is the good news of the Christian message. And friends, that has the potential to begin to dig us out of this judgmental mess that we find ourselves in our families, in our marriages, in our churches, even in our society, right?

We read earlier he was crushed for our iniquities. The righteous suffered for the unrighteous. The judge is judged in our place.

And that, friend, is an undeserved gift. It's a free mercy that the good God, who is active in our world, gives us, right? That is the gospel. And I think it's incredibly compelling.

[22 : 52] I think it's incredibly beautiful. It's more than just intellectually plausible. It's satisfying to the great need of our heart and to our society and to our families, right? It becomes hope for a world of hypocrites like you and me.

And so what do we do forward? Where does this leave us? Well, it leaves us right where chapter 7 places us, which is it forces us to do radical self-examination, right?

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? Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your own eye when there is a log in your own eye, right?

Jesus used an illustration that has a rhetorical question behind it, and it's this. Can you tell someone to remove a splinter or a speck of dust from their eye when there is a whole plank, a two by four?

And those are the words that Jesus is using in your own eye. Well, absolutely not. It's impossible. And just like a speck is far worse, a log is far, a log in the eye is far worse than a speck of dust, self-righteousness, judgmentalism is far worse in your life than any other issue you may see in another person's life.

[24 : 04] And that the self-righteous judgmental spirit is the one thing that is preventing you from being able to accurately see around you, right? And so the application here for us is to take a hard look at ourselves.

It means that each of us must be in consistent patterns and relationships and liturgies of self-examination, of constant repentance, of self-reflection.

There's an author whom I respect greatly. It's named Fleming Rutledge and she says this, every Christian is summoned to see him or herself among the perpetrators for whom Christ has substituted himself.

That we must be people who are daily, weekly, monthly, examining our own hearts, looking for the specks in our own eye, not snapping out, searching for the errors and logs in others, right?

And this self-respect is especially important when we come to a task of speaking to another brother, right? Or a sister. Notice, Jesus doesn't say never go to another person and call out their sin.

[25 : 10] He says just do hard work on yourself first. And this is so important for those of us who are in positions of authority or leadership in our world, right? And all of us have that authority in some ways or another.

Elders, parents, husbands, peers. If you are going to go to your brother and sister and say, hey, this needs work in your life, spend days in prayer, examining your own heart.

Spouses, if you know of an error in your husband or your wife's life, before you go and say this needs to change, spend days looking to your own heart. Roommates, before you get on your roommate for cleaning the dishes again or not picking up their shoes at the door, look at your own heart.

Where are there failures of love in you, right? I often tell in premarital counseling, which I do a lot with college students, that if you're going to have a fight, you have to go into it saying, I'm 51% of the problem.

I'm bringing more error into this relationship than you are, right? If you have two people who are willing to do this, there can maybe be reconciliation, right? Parents, this is so true for us.

[26 : 20] As we're shepherding young hearts, as we're directing young minds to know and love the Lord, we must be constantly repenting. I had to do it this morning with my daughter. Here I am, a preacher, having to tell my daughter, I'm sorry, honey, I snapped at you.

Will you forgive me? Constant repentance. And this is true for all of our lives, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, to be examining ourselves more and more, to be examining for the specs, right?

And think with me, if we were to create cultures, marriages, families, churches, community, home groups that are animated by this kind of repentant self-reflection, what kind of a church would we be?

If we, Christians, if Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church was a church known inside and outside as a church that is a repentant, self-examining community that looks to the one who was judged in their place and then responds with self-examination and repentance, what kind of a model, what kind of a good news, what kind of a salt and light contrast would that provide to a world of condemnation and judgment?

Suddenly, I hope, I trust that our peers and our non-Christian friends would say something's different in this place and we can say, yes, we are not a people condemned. We are a people who know mercy.

[27 : 43] Though we are hypocrites, we serve a merciful God. Husbands, how are you? Session, how are you? Wives, how are you? Children, how are you repenting?

One of my favorite pastors, he's a missionary theologian, commenting on this passage, writes, he says, the world does not need a perfect eye, but a consciously imperfect eye. The world does not need a perfect Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian church.

The world needs a consciously repenting, imperfect Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian church. That is what Jesus is getting at here.

That means as long as we are a world full of logs and specks, we are in this conscious, vicious cycle. But as long as we are people who are aware that we are imperfect and repentant and looking to the judge judged in our place, then there can be hope.

Then there can be goodness and sweetness, right? And so this passage does not command you to go out and beat you up and say, stop judging others. No. That would abuse us all.

[28 : 48] That would beat us up. But rather, as John Owen, the great pastor of mortification, says when he talks about killing sin, he says the only effective and long-term way to kill sin is to not focus on our sin, not focus on the brokenness, but to focus on Jesus.

Focus on his loveliness. Focus on, in this text, the judge judged in your place. how sweet and compelling and how generous and how merciful that is to marvel at the anti-hypocrite punished for your hypocrisy.

And if that, when that, as that is sweet to your heart, that becomes the balm, the healing for our judgmental and your judgmental world. So don't try to not be a judgmental person.

Look to the one who was judged in your place moment by moment, hour by hour, and be ever humbled by that and refreshed by that good news. Would you pray with me?

Father in heaven, your word cuts to the core as it always does. We are struck, I'm struck by my desperate need for you to be gracious to us all, that we live in a time and in a world that is full of judgment, wrongly placed judgment, and that you alone are our hope.

[30 : 12] Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Christ, that you were indeed judged in our place. You received the condemnation that we deserve and we receive the acceptance and the mercy that we don't deserve.

I pray for each heart in here, maybe people who have heard it for a million times or for the first, that it would sink in deep and that you would minister to us and send us out more Christ-like through your word.

That it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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