**Who’s to Judge Part II**

**James 4:11-12**

**Matthew 7:1-12**

**June 28th**

What’s the Golden Rule?

Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself.

I wonder how the issue of judging one another is is tied to how I love God and love my neighbour?

Am I living out the Law of Love as James puts it.

**Let’s dive into the text…**

**First Jesus gives a …**

1. **Warning to Not Fall Prey to Hypocrisy vs. 1-5**

“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged.For you will be treated as you treat others.[a] The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye[c] when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend,[d] ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”

The warning out of the gate is to NOT judge. It’s a warning to not play God.

So easy to look down on others, as if we’ve got our stuff together. As if our hands are clean in every area.

Who do you find easy to judge? Come on. We all find it easy to judge some segment of society. It makes us feel good.

**Athletic** often judge the non athletic.

**Tea drinkers judge coffee drinkers.**

**Vegan** can judge the meat eaters out there.

**Non-religious** judge the religious

**Liberals** judge the conservatives

**Closed-minded** judge the open minded

The list goes on.

I think it’s easy for us in the church, those who have walked with Jesus for a long time to judge those outside the church.

**Hugh Halter** says this about the sin of judging others, especially those who don’t call themselves followers of Jesus.

What’s worse, doing something you don’t know is wrong or doing something you know is wrong?  You’re right if you guessed the latter. Clearly, when people do things that they don’t feel any conviction against or don’t know are against God’s intended design, we would call them blind, or lost, but certainly not bad or evil.

But what about people that know what is right and wrong, good or bad and continue to act out?

Well, yes, that would seem to be worse because at least they understand.  So disobedience is worse than ignorance.

**Do you agree?**

“People that have not yielded their lives to Christ didn’t get the memo we might have gotten about God’s design and intention for life.”

Romans says that every person will still be held accountable to some knowledge that there is a God by simply looking out the window and seeing that something has ordered the universe, but they do not have a context for their brokenness.”

To know something is wrong and continue to do it seems to be more significant than doing something out of ignorance.

No wonder Jesus was so hard on the Pharisees in His day. And had no problem having dinner with tax collectors and prostitutes.

Religiosity so blinds us of our own brokenness and need for grace.

To help us better understand Jesus’ words we need to look at the earlier passage.

**Matthew 6:1-18** where Jesus warns his disciples of the sin of hypocrisy.

“Don’t do your good deeds publicly…

don’t draw attention to your acts of charity…

reminder to give your gifts in private…

not as a display of “hey look at me!”

**Warnings to not…**

“Not pray on street corners so everyone sees you…

but pray in private.”

Out of this Jesus teaches them how to pray / Lord’s Prayer. Not give God the grocery list but what intimacy with God looks like; where it begins, how it’s cultivated…through prayer.

Cool. You want to know how to love? How to find balance between discernment and judgment, steering clear of hypocrisy? It’s stay close to Jesus. Know the Father. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

As we experience God’s mercy and grace, as we see who He is in all His glory and see who we are, desperately in need of grace, we are able to extend that grace to others.

The biggest deterrent to hypocrisy is my lack of intimacy with God.

Jesus continues with the teaching on judgment and talks about the speck and the log.

**Vs. 3-5**

Have you ever had a speck in your eye? And you couldn’t get it out. Eventually you have to get help; ask a friend to help you see what you can’t.

Interesting, Jesus uses the word friend here 3X. You ask a friend to help. Preferably a friend who sees clearly. Isn’t suffering from blurred vision themselves.

Picture yourself, your eye’s watering, blurred vision b/c of your own speck, or twig, now trying to help someone else with what you think to be a speck in his or her eye?

You’re eyes are so blurry, so impaired you can’t see well enough to take the speck out of someone else’s eye.

“You can’t see past the log in your own eye.”

You and I will always project our own stuff onto others, if we’re not first aware of it in our own lives.

We won’t see past our own issues.

I think of a surgeon doing some pretty intricate work. They think they see something that needs to be removed; they pull out their scalpel and start cutting, and end up cutting something that didn’t need to be removed in the first place.

Your vision is impaired. You think you see a speck but who knows, it may not even be a speck.

**Stories from medical journals in 2007 & 2012.**

Surgery on the wrong side or area of the body affects thousands of people a year. In a recent medical journal they concluded that between 1,300 to 2,700 wrong-site procedures annually in the United States.

In Florida a few years ago, a series of mistakes by medical staff resulted in a doctor amputating the wrong leg. British doctors in 2002 were tried and acquitted for manslaughter when a patient died after they removed the wrong kidney.

Jesse Matlock had a wandering eye. A simple surgery could fix it, but the surgeon cut into the left eye instead of the right. The surgeon said she lost her sense of direction and didn’t realize she’d operated on the wrong eye until after the operation.

When we try to remove specks out of people’s spiritual eyes, while having specks or logs in our own, we cause severe damage.

Often causing spiritual paralysis; deep wounds that need intentional care in order to heal.

This is why intimacy with God through prayer is critical. This is where healthy self-examination takes place; which keeps us humble.

**King David** knew this. In **Psalm 139** he prays, “Search me o God and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. And see if there’s any wicked way in me, and lead in me in your way everlasting.”

It’s in prayer we allow God to turn his searchlight on.

It’s in this sort of prayer I allow the Holy Spirit to affirm me, love me, convict me, and encourage me.

If that’s all prayer is to you; feeling guilty for your stuff you’ve missed the point. Yes it’s self-awareness, seeing our desperate need for God’s grace, but it doesn’t stop there.

Yes we see our incredible need but it’s in prayer we experience God meeting us in that need, with his love and mercy.

How we understand this issue of judging depends on our relationship with God – it all flows out of this relationship.

**Father. Son & Holy Spirit**

People who experience and continue to experience God’s mercy and forgiveness will extend mercy and forgiveness to others.

I like what **Michael Wilkins** says.

 “After self-criticism takes place, relationships are based on redemptive empathy rather than condemning detachment.”

How many of us have a bad taste in our mouth when it comes to judging, or being discerning, b/c someone tried to do this to us out of condemning detachment.

Just like Jesus, all we do and are flows out of our intimacy with God as Father and King. And with others.

**You want to know how to not judge? It begins with prayer. Intimacy with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can’t walk this line without Him.**

So that’s the starting point. Do not judge. Heart of humility.

**So where’s the paradox?**

The paradox is that even though we are called to not judge, to play God, to live as though we are above the law of love; it is very clear that at times scripture calls us to do the opposite, critique culture, be discerning knowing the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, light and darkness.

The word for judge here is krinos

Has a number of nuances the English language misses

It can mean …

* ordinary discernment or evaluation
* Judicial litigation
* Judgment in the age to come
* Pronouncement of guilt as in a trial situation
* Absolute determination of someone’s fate

So what’s the use in this text?

The latter two. It’s a warning against setting ourselves up as people’s judge; pronouncing their guilt before God.

But it’s not excluding the need for healthy critique, ordinary discernment and evaluation.

**There’s the paradox. We are called to live in that tension.**

**To clarify, paradox in scripture isn’t a mistake. It isn’t error in scripture. A case where the writers didn’t hear God right. It’s not contradiction, it’s paradox. It’s meant to be paradox.**

**Let me give you another example.**

“let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (5:16);

yet later he admonished,

“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them” (6:1).

A balance of both advises us to avoid the temptation from both personal cowardice and religious vanity by the adage,

“Show when tempted to *hide*, hide when tempted to *show*” (Nystrom).

So concerning the admonishment to not judge, we see only God has the right to judge; but God delegated this right and power to Jesus; who then gave that same responsibility to the apostles.

We see this all through scripture.

**Ephesians 5:11-12** says, “Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. **12**It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret.”

**Eph. 4:15** says, “Speak the truth in love…”.

**1 Jn. 4:1** tells us that we are to exercise judgment when it comes to spiritual matters.

**1 Cor. 5:12-13** gives this hard word.

***“****It isn’t my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning.”*

Let me be clear on the context.

In the church in Corinth there was this situation where a man in the church was living with his father’s wife. And the church wasn’t just turning a blind eye to it, they were celebrating it. So due to the nature of the public nature of this particular sin, the discipline had to go public.

Be careful not to take this text out of context. We don’t now use this as fuel for excommunicating and public shaming people for their mistakes, wrong choices and blunders.

I want to be clear. Public shaming very rarely goes well and produces godly fruit.

Here Paul’s strong discipline here was meant to build up and restore, not to shame. Which it did accomplish.

**This is where if we don’t get the balance right, we fall into one of the two extremes.**

~ Feeling it’s your job to manage everyone’s sin.

~ Or letting it all go and saying nothing. Not dealing with your own log in your own eye, and not helping anyone else with their speck.

*“Both principles are necessary for helping us function effectively as we walk with God in real life. Sure it’s simpler just to take one side of the issue or the other, but we will be wiser and healthier if we find a Spirit led balance.”* Nystrom

Like many key truths in scripture, it’s not either/or, it’s both and.

**Personal:** Let me ask you this. Have you ever benefited from a friend who pursued you in your disobedience? You were struggling, or unaware of your own stuff, and they didn’t drop you as a friend, but loved you enough to press in, ask questions, and challenged you? Have you ever needed a friend to back off and just pray? Sure. We often need both.

We have all benefited from those friends.

That’s one of the keys in this text, is that this critique or evaluation is done by friends.

**3X** “friend” is mentioned in this text.

This isn’t just anyone. You need to be a friend. There needs to be repor, credibility that has been earned over time, you have invested in the relationship enough to be able to say the words. Healthy attachment causes empathy. You truly care for the person.

One thing I am realizing is that even as a pastor I can’t assume that I have this right to speak into your life in this way. I have to earn it as well. You need to know I love you. I often have to ask permission.

And like this text, it begins in persistent prayer…where I am talking to God about you a lot more than talking to you about God.

Love begins in prayer.

It’s amazing what you can get away with if the person knows you love them.

**Story:** Mike Barkman – pastor in Powell River.

Had the guts to tell me how I was coming across. Caused good healthy self-evaluation and growth.

**Morris Dirks** one of my old youth pastors challenged me about the hot-rod photos I had on my bedroom wall. Nothing wrong with the cars but he was concerned whether the photos of bikini clad women were healthy for my heart, and my view of women?

I thank God for these people who were on speck patrol in my life. The men and women who modeled what a humble self examined life looked like, and out of that had the guts to ask me the tough questions.

**CS Lewis’** “Love is something more stern and splendid than mere kindness.”

This is the mark of discipleship, the responsibility to help remove the speck in one another’s eyes. But it must come from a humble self-examined life otherwise it just creates more damage than good.

So we see the warning against hypocrisy and the danger of judging one another inappropriately.

But we also see the …

1. **Caution Against Being Undiscerning 7:6 B**

**6**“Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

So what does Jesus mean by this term “pigs”?

“Do not throw your pearls before pigs.”

Pigs were the same thing as dogs in the ancient world.

They were omnivores and would often be found feeding on decaying flesh; running the streets often responsible for the death of little children.

Here Jesus is saying don’t waste your pearls…

Pearls here symbolize the value and beauty and richness of the gospel, something so precious, so valuable, should not be wasted, squandered on those who don’t appreciate it – who are hostile to it.

So is Jesus saying that we go around calling people pigs?

No it was a metaphor, a picture everyone related to. They saw the damage it would create to try to cozy up with one of these animals.

Essentially Jesus is saying that some are just enemies of God’s kingdom; it could also represent cultural trends, ideologies or beliefs that are against the kingdom of love.

Anything that would be hostile to the message of the kingdom of love; the gospel of the kingdom.

Just got a phone call Sat AM from Kenda’s parents in Kuwait about the Mosk hit with an ISIS suicide bomber which killed 27 and injured 100’s on Friday morning. I wonder if the church in Syria would better understand what Jesus is referring to here with ISIS on their doorstep?

This is the call to discernment. Don’t throw your pearls to pigs.

Did you know that in Jesus’ time, Jesus never once had a discussion with Herod, or any of his sons.

Always lived in the shadow of this evil dictator;

* Jesus born in Bethlehem – Herod’s palace and mt was there
* Jesus moved to Nazareth – Herod’s son was building another palace stones throw away
* Jesus moves to Capernaum – Herod’s son built a city just up the street

Wanted to see a miracle but Jesus never sought him out.

**Larry Norman sings a song “You gotta Watch What You’re Doing.”**

*Moma killed a chicken, thought it was a duck, put it on the table with it’s legs stick’in up. Papa broke his glasses when he fell down drunk, tried to drown the kitty cat, turned out to be a skunk. You gotta watch what you’re doing.*

*I knew a girl, sweet as can be*

*But she fell for a man like a chain saw a tree*

*She listen to his lies, fooled by his charms*

*Now she's sitting with a baby in her arms*

*Some folks smile, they seem all right,*

*But you find out later they were an angel of light*

*Try to love everybody, but don't be blind*

*Because some kind of people try to mess your mind*

*You gotta watch who you know*

Herod was an enemy of the gospel; ISIS as an organization is the enemy of the gospel…

**An old saying** goes, *“Never try to teach a pig to sing. It wastes your time and annoys the pig.”*

Yet we must remember that some who we think are dogs or pigs will respond to the pearls that we have. We shouldn’t make a hasty “judgment.”

Remember that Jesus saw much more in the tax collectors and sinners and the thief on cross than did the religious establishment—perhaps even more than they saw in themselves.

But it so requires prayer; closeness with God – knowing His heart and mind.

This leads me to my 3rd and final point…

1. **Balance Only Possible through Holy Spirit 7:7-11**

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him. “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.”

“Ask … seek … knock and the door will be opened to you.”

The invitation is to lean in closer to Jesus. Capture His heart for people and the situation.

Do you think Jesus’ disciples found it hard to find balance?

To be at the same time both merciful and forgiving, yet wisely discerning;

to give other disciples the benefit of the doubt, yet to be on guard for those who would harm the community;

to judge no one, yet to be wisely observant to see the true character of people and deal with them accordingly.

The invitation is that through prayer, closeness with God, getting to know his heart, we can be filled with Godly wisdom, divine enablement that can only be supplied by God.

This is how we avoid both extremes. This is how we walk this line. Find healthy balance.

Ask, seek and knock is an equivalent text to Rev. 3:20 which is God’s invitation for the church to open themselves to the intimacy of fellowship with God the Father, the Son and the Spirit. A picture of being invited into relationship with the godhead.

Only here we see this rising scale of intensity. It reflects this persistent manner of a life lived before the Father.

It’s a matter of the heart isn’t it?

All of this flows out of a fullness of a person’s heart.

And when I don’t respond in a loving manner it’s a reminder that there are still areas in my life that are still unchanged.

The passage ends with the Golden Rule.

 ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ … And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ”

The practice of the Golden Rule as an outgrowth of discipleship to Jesus.

**Hillel the Elder** supposedly having as his motto, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn!”

So it’s all about learning to love as Jesus loved.

That’s what it means to be a disciple; a student; an apprentice – it’s growing in Christ-likeness.

As I grow in Christ’s likeness, the hope is that I will not judge one another inappropriately, because I have experienced God’s mercy and forgiveness and so will extend to others that same mercy and forgiveness out of gratitude to God.

As I grow in intimacy with the Father, Son and Spirit my discernment will become sharp; and I will learn whether it’s a good idea to share Jesus with those who seem on the outside, like they are hostile to it.

To walk with Jesus is about dependence and growing in intimacy; inner growth in what it means to love well. To live free to obey this royal law of love, in whatever situation I find myself in.

Whether it be my neighbour or my enemy; that we as people become rooted and established in love.

To live by faith, known by love, and a voice of hope.

Maybe it’s time to open the door to more of Jesus?

Open your heart to Jesus; a decision to follow Him, be a disciple, a learner.

We can’t learn this, and live it without Him.