

St Martins C3 – September 8, 2024

Judge Not – Between You and Me

Sermon Summary:

Research has shown if you want to have a fulfilled life then the number one thing you need is warm connections and good relationships. It turns out that loving others is not just good, it is good for us.

This is the way God has created us – the greatest command alongside loving God is to love our neighbours as ourselves.

This doesn't always happen because, in our fallen world, there is conflict in our relationships. It is easy for misunderstandings, insensitivity, and threats to our self to cause brokenness in our relationships.

So, the aim of this series aim is to prevent and fix relational rifts. We are going to explore how we stop there being issues and what we can do when there is something *Between You and Me*.

Read Matthew 7:1-5

The mindset that often causes rifts to come in relationships is the mindset of judgment. It's when you look down on others, and make note of their failures and faults. You cannot get close to someone you are in the process of judging.

We have all faced the sting of others' judgments, we need to make sure we aren't the causes of those stings.

The reason we should not judge others is because one day we will be judged by God. When we judge we are putting ourselves in the place of God. Let's lay our self-righteousness down. We are sinners saved by grace.

We say we judge people because of their words and their actions, but often we do more than that. We assume people's intentions, which creates issues in our relationships.

We need to eliminate unnecessary negative interpretations and instead see how we can believe the best in others.

Let's get rid of our judgments of others. Instead, choose to have a mindset that sees them a different way and seeks to build the relationship.

Read 1 Peter 4:8

We all need to realise something vital about the other people in our lives. that every person is someone that God created and Jesus died for

Doesn't that change the way you see them? If Jesus would die for them we can love them too.

One of my Bible lecturers said it this way, "You have been saved by grace. When hurt comes, let grace meet it halfway." Before the little thing becomes a big thing let grace act like a shield so that the thing that could hurt no longer does.

Let grace meet it halfway.

Connect Group Material:

Key Point

To prevent relational rifts adopt a positive attitude towards others rather than a posture of judgment.

Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

What would our church (or family/marriage/work/friends) be like if we chose to begin by believing the best in others?

Why are church people known as judgmental people?

What has your experience been with judgment in the church?

Why do we judge?

When have you, or when might you, misinterpret another person's words, actions or inaction?

How does knowing God's grace and mercy help us not to judge?

When is it appropriate to judge when is it not?

How can we stop ourselves from judging when it is a natural response to someone's negative behaviour?

What would it look like to put others first this week?

Monday Devotion: To Judge or Not to Judge

Read Matthew 7:1-6; Deuteronomy 1:15-17

In this week's sermon, we talked about not judging other people. In our devotional notes this week we want to discuss the nuance of what Jesus meant.

Some have taken Jesus' command as a Universal command that all judging is wrong, even to the extent of stopping Christians from being judges in the law courts.

Yet scripture talks numerous times about God's followers being able to judge others. So, which is it? Can we judge or not? I believe it is clear that Christians can judge under certain circumstances.

If someone asks to babysit your children it is right that you evaluate whether they will do it well. Equally, there are times when those in the church are required to discipline and bring a judgment on those who are openly sinning in the church.

However, judging as a casual condemnation of others' behaviour or intentions needs to be avoided. The difference is the evaluations we make for those things under our authority when we are doing what God has called us to do. When we judge others because we are hurt we are putting ourselves in the place of God – only he can judge sin.

Let's judge the right things in the right way.

Tuesday Devotion: Discernment

Read Proverbs 4:7; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16

A big element of judging rightly is discernment. We are called to bring Godly discernment into our lives and our world. Discernment is the ability to see what is going on under the surface. Discernment is knowing what's going on when you don't know what's going on. It is how we see what is true and what is not, so we might bring the love and wisdom of God into a situation.

According to 1 Corinthians 2, we have the mind of Christ. So we see the world as he sees the world. Jesus, we know, had a way of seeing what was happening and what was happening underneath the surface. As we get to know his mind we can discern what is really happening.

True discernment is not just seeing below the surface or making connections with God but understanding what you should do with that knowledge.

When you discern something, be humble. This is not an opportunity to show your spiritual superiority. It is an opportunity for two things. One to be drawn into prayer for a person or situation and two to go deeper in a relationship.

“Discernment is God’s call to intercession, never to faultfinding.” Corrie Ten Boom

Pray today that God would give you discernment and then wise judgment to know what to do with it.

Wednesday Devotion: Church Discipline

Read 1 Corinthians 5; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

One area God has given the church the responsibility to judge is sinful behaviour in the church.

Authority is given to leadership to work on behalf of the church to discipline (2 Timothy 2:24-26; Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5). It is the responsibility of leadership to ensure sound doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16; Titus 1:9), preserve unity (Philippians 4:2-3), give spiritual guidance (1 Thessalonians 5:12), and watch over the church (Hebrews 13:17).

Church discipline is done to ensure the purity and holiness of the church, to restore the wrongdoer and done out of love for the individual. Discipline is never vindictive, and the goal is not punishment.

Church discipline hopes to lead the person to redemption (1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20). Discipline begins by gently working with the person to overcome the sinful area of their life (Galatians 6:1-2). Confronting sin is the most loving thing to do as repentance brings the lost person back into a relationship with the community and with God (Matthew 18:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 2 Corinthians 2:7-10).

Matthew 18:15-17 outlines the process for church discipline we use at St Martins C3. We first privately challenge an individual, and then we give a plural challenge. If the person still does not repent then we look at potential restrictions and if necessary a public challenge.

Thursday Devotion: Limitations of Judgment

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-7

The Corinthian church was an interesting group of people. They created factions based on their judgment of one person or another. Paul pushes back on this way of thinking saying that he does not accept these judgments. He does not even judge himself. This should be left to God.

It is tempting to judge other Christians, evaluating whether or not they are good followers of Jesus. However, the only one who knows a person's heart is God. Only he has the right to judge the Christian.

As we saw in yesterday's devotion from the next chapter of Corinthians there is the need to judge those who have fallen into a lifestyle of sin, but we cannot judge who is the better follower of Jesus.

I was talking to a child recently who showed their talent to the class. They were annoyed that another person showed the exact same talent. Then they shrugged it off and said, "It's okay though – mine was better." My encouragement to the child was that they should not be comparing their gifts with someone else's. Instead, they should celebrate the way the other child expressed themselves and not let it diminish what they had done.

When we judge others' walk with God we usually consider ourselves better than them – and that is the arrogance we need to avoid.

Friday Devotion: Love is the Key

Read Philippians 1:9-11

Our final question is this: What does love have to do with judgment?

Love is the key to understanding the will of God. I remember talking with a pastor who was very big on Biblical knowledge. He would often use big words and complex terms in his sermons, most of which went over people's heads.

He reasoned that if we could get people to understand more theology then it would bring lasting change. He even quoted the above verses. "See," he would say, "we are supposed to grow in knowledge and understanding so that we can live pure lives."

What he neglected in this verse was the first phrase. The overflowing of love.

The goal of the Christian life is not more knowledge and understanding but maturity of love. Always ask yourself, "What does love look like in this situation?"

You will find that a perspective of love gives clarity, not only on whether your discernment and judgment is accurate but on what to do with it.

Discernment should never lead to feelings of superiority and actions that demean one another. Instead, it should lead us with truth to act in humility and love.