



WHY DO YOU LOOK AT THE SPECK IN YOUR BROTHER'S EYE
AND PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE PLANK IN YOUR OWN EYE?

~ LUKE 22:24-27 ~

PASTOR COLIN RIEKE ~ JULY 21, 2013

"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. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

During my days at the Seminary, I had several part-time jobs. One of the most interesting and challenging jobs I had was helping out at a place called Northside Lutheran Ministries. This was a ministry center on the North side of Milwaukee. This area was predominantly filled with people living below the poverty line. On Tuesday afternoons we would open the center and have a Bible study for people to attend, after which we would give them a food bag to help out. Besides Tuesdays, I would spend most of my afternoons making visits and having Bible Studies with a number of people who had contact with Northside Lutheran Ministries.

These visits could be challenging. While most of the time people were glad to have me stop by, it was sad to see the living conditions they had to live with each day. Many of them had very little knowledge of the Bible, or what knowledge they had, they did not understand. What is even sadder is that this type of situation is playing out across our country...and I'm not talking about people falling into poverty, but the Biblical illiteracy. One of the most known, and also most misinterpreted passages in all of Scripture is the one we have before us in our gospel for this morning. Do you know what that is? **"Do not judge, or you too will be judged."** This was and is an excuse that many people, even self-professing Christians, use to not worry about another person's shortcomings and sins.

But is that really how it should be taken? So that we don't have to go through the uncomfortable act of confronting someone with their sin. "God will take care of it in the end, why do I have to worry about it?" Yes, God will take care of it in the end, but it's not the end yet, so what do you do? You confront that person with their sin so that they will not be condemned by God on the last day. This is what it means to JUDGE CORRECTLY.

1. Hypocrites Condemn
2. Christian's Rebuke

When Jesus says here **“Do not judge,”** he is not saying that all judging is wrong. He is not saying that we should all go about our business and do whatever we want to do. God describes a time when this happened. It was the time right after the Israelites came into the promised land of Israel. It is written, **“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”** This is not the way that God left it. He knew the Israelites, like all nations, needed law and order. You can’t have everyone doing as they see fit and expect to prosper. God had various nations subdue the Israelites to get their attention. When they called out for God, he sent a judge to rescue them. In all there were eleven men and one woman who were judges for the people of Israel. But these individuals did not just wear robes and sit behind a bench, they went out and carried out justice on Israel’s enemies.

In Romans 13, we see how God established governments in order to keep the law and order in the land, so you don’t have it like in the early days of Israel where everyone does as he sees fit. God has set up these structures in the family, for the parents to have authority over their children. He has set it up in the rest of society with schools, for teachers having authority over their students. We have law enforcement, we have the justice system in place for a reason. We even have structure in the church, pastors and other called workers have the responsibility to care for your souls. You also, members of Grace have a say in how this church carries out its mission. These institutions are set up by God, and is not what Jesus is talking about when he says, **“Do not judge.”** He has placed people in positions of authority to guide and direct and, if necessary, judge for the good of society.

OK, so we’ve talked a bit about what Jesus doesn’t mean when he says, **“Do not judge,”** so what does he mean? It’s interesting to look at what Jesus said just before these words. He said, **“be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”** We see Jesus saying the same thing in different ways – to be merciful, and – don’t judge. So what Jesus is saying is don’t not show mercy by judging a person. For those people who are not showing mercy to others, Jesus says that he will not show mercy to you. The way you treat people will be the way that God treats you. This is a warning Jesus gives.

So this means that we shouldn’t ever tell someone what they’re doing is wrong, because God’s other authorities are there for that. No! Because as a Christian we have a responsibility to do this. We do not have a responsibility to look down our long noses at them in a condemning judgment. Especially in this context, that is what “flavor” judgment takes on. It’s putting yourself in the different role of condemning someone. **JUDGE CORRECTLY.** It is the hypocrites who condemn.

That must put us in some pretty good company right, because we haven’t judged anyone like that. We weren’t the ones holding signs outside of a particular Florida courtroom saying God will judge. We haven’t taken the law into our own hands and carried out justice. We haven’t condemned anyone for their boorish behavior. What a fine and dandy lot we are. I have just one word to say: hypocrites!

Our very actions of thinking ourselves better or worse than others makes us guilty of judging. Sure, we may not have “judged” as harshly as some people in the world, but we are guilty of judging all the time. We are guilty of judging when measure ourselves up to someone else’s house, job, family, wife. I have been guilty of wondering why I wasn’t given as much smarts as some of my classmates, the charisma skills, the money. And we haven’t even touched how guilty we are when we judge someone’s faith.

How easy it can be for me as a pastor to think that people just don't care about God because they aren't in church, I see how important everything else is in their life for them, but they must not love God because they haven't been to church. They must not love God because they didn't put anything in the offering plate today. They shouldn't be going to heaven because of the way they have lived. This is the judging that Jesus is talking about when he speaks of JUDGING CORRECTLY. It is the hypocrites who condemn.

But while we are in the judging mood, we forgot one person. Martin Luther put it this way. "Hans, take a hold of your nose and reach into your own bosom. If you are looking for a villain on whom to pass judgment, you will find there the biggest villain on earth." For while all the time that we have seen someone else may total up to knowing them for a year or two. But you have known yourself for your whole life, and for some of us that is a long time. You know every dark secret about you that even your spouse or your best friend might not know. You know the times the devil has tempted and you have succumbed. And then you must be ashamed of yourself. You would stop pleasing yourself and pray God would forgive you and others.

There was another story that happened in Jesus' life. A group of people, including the religious leaders of Israel brought to Jesus a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. The punishment for such a crime was death by stoning. They asked Jesus what they should do. Jesus didn't overreact, and in fact just knelt down and started drawing in the dirt. They asked him the question again and without even looking up he said, **"Let the one with no sin cast the first stone."** One by one that raucous mob dropped the stones and disappeared, until it was only Jesus and the woman left. Jesus asked, **"Where are they? Has no one condemned you?"** and she replied "no." Then Jesus speaks these words, **"Then neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin."**

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Make no mistake about it, you are that woman. You are before the judgment seat of God and you have all your accusers lining up to throw that first stone, for that is the punishment. But God says, **"I don't condemn you"** It's not because you don't deserve it. It's not because God is willing to sweep it under the rug. It is because of the only one who had the right to judge, Jesus Christ, the man without sin, didn't. It is because he was judged for our life, and we were judged for his.

It wouldn't be fair for God to collect twice on a debt. We have already been declared "not guilty." What a wonderful promise this is from God. It is in light of this that it is so important to JUDGE CORRECTLY. We are not to judge like the hypocrites who condemn. But Christians rebuke. As Christians, we recognize the incredible burden which has been lifted off our shoulders, and want others to know that feeling. That's what the rest of the example is all about, you know, the one with the speck of sawdust and the plank.

The story goes like this. If someone has a speck of sawdust in the eye, something very small, but also very pestering, how foolish would it be for someone who has a huge plank blocking their vision to help you? Pretty foolish, right? But that's what hypocrites do. Christians, who rebuke or correct, are to be different. The plank in the eye is not sin. The plank in the eye is unrepentant sin. A Christian readily admits he is not perfect, not as an excuse of course, but as reality. But this reality, our weakness, is God's

strength. For where we are weak God is strong. Christians will readily desire to leave our life of sin, and want others to do the same.

Maybe rebuke is a strong word, a word that can have negative connotations with it. Christians speak the truth in love. This goes especially for other Christians – perhaps our family, our friends, maybe even neighbors. Because even Christians must be reminded of the sin that lurks in our lives. It would be foolish to leave the plank in your eye, but it is also foolish to leave the speck in your eye. Why do we do this? We do this not to get saved but because we're saved. We do this because we recognize the harm that sin causes in our lives, great or small. Because every sin takes us further and further away from God.

So what have you learned today? You have learned to JUDGE CORRECTLY. JUDGING CORRECTLY has nothing to do with judging based on our own feelings, our own happiness, or our own beliefs. JUDGING CORRECTLY has everything to do with what God says in his Word. Those protesters who were outside a Florida courtroom raised signs high that God will judge George Zimmerman for what he had done. Well they weren't wrong. God will judge George Zimmerman...and us. And if God finds anyone guilty, it will not be for the wrongs they have committed in this life, it will be for rejecting his Son as Savior. And those he will acquit, they will be acquitted not on the basis of the life they lived, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Amen!