

“Loving Our Neighbor”

A Sermon for the Family of God

Matthew 7:1-12

Pastor Jeff Stivason

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Jeff: Before we go into prayer, I'll give Don a minute to take off his jacket. Have you ever noticed R. C. Sproul's book *Luther's Barber*? It's a kids' book. And Luther really did have this barber. And his barber was a guy that Luther actually wrote a book for. What's that?

Participant: On how to pray.

Jeff: On how to pray, yes. And so here's this celebrity pastor for his time taking time to write this. What is it? It's like a 30- or 40-page book, an American edition. So handwritten I don't know how long that would have been.

But he writes this book for him on how to pray. But the end of that barber's life is not in that book, not at the end of R. C. Sproul's book. What happened to him?

What happened to him was that he was out with his brother-in-law one night. And his brother-in-law told him that the local witch doctor, however they would have described him, had put a spell on him and caused him to be invincible. And his brother-in-law said to the barber, "Stab me and you'll see." And so the barber stabs him, and he dies. And it didn't end well for Peter the barber.

I just wish that I were Martin Luther when I heard the news that Peter the barber had stabbed his brother-in-law for believing in a superstition like that? Can you imagine that? Because that was the kind of thing that Luther was trying to free the church from. And that would have had to deeply hit the man. So on that sober note, Don,--

Participant: Do you know what the word *superstition* means? It means that we believe too much. It's super-stition. We believe things like that, like you could stab me and I'd live. You believe too much.

Jeff: Wow!

Participant: Does that matter?

Jeff: That's interesting.

Participant: I thought so. *(Laughter) (Music)*

Jeff: Father in heaven, it's a privilege to call You that because we know that You have indeed saved us from our sins. And we know that our sinfulness can lead us into those superstitious beliefs. We had all kinds of crazy things that we believed about the supernatural before You brought us from the pit and set our feet upon the Rock of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And You continue to purify our thinking. You continue to sanctify our lives. You continue to bring us into conformity to the image of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we need it. So Father, as we bow before You this morning, help us to remember that from which we have been saved, the utter sinfulness of sin. And as we come before You today, Father, and submit ourselves to Your word, we pray that You will help us, change us, that You will glorify Yourself in the process as You work us into the image of Christ.

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Father, we think about various men today. We think about Frank. And we pray that the MRI would show the doctors what they need to know so that they might move forward in wisdom. Father, we pray for Harold, as he’s no longer able to come. And we ask that You would grant him Your peace and Your comfort. Strengthen Him, Father, for that which You have for him in this part of his life now.

Father, we give You thanks for the good news that we heard about our brother Bruce. We are so thankful that he’s able to sleep through the night. And we pray, Lord, that that would continue, and that what would continue is the healing process not only in his legs, but in his back. And Father, we pray that You’ll bring him to full health.

Lord, we also pray for Tabitha. We ask that Your hand would be upon her. We’re so thankful for the good that You’ve done in her life. And Lord, we’re thankful for the way in which You use technology to help. And Lord, we are thankful for it, and pray that it would continue to be used for good for her and to Your glory.

Father, we ask now that You would turn our attention toward Your word. And Father, we pray that as we immerse ourselves in it that You would bless us, Father, with a lasting blessing, one that will persist into all eternity, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. So we are going to be looking today, continuing to look at The Sermon on the Mount. You’ll remember that that’s our outline—blessings, loving others, loving God, loving God, loving others, and then the conclusion. That’s the outline that we’ve been following. It’s the outline of The Sermon on the Mount. I’ll not rehearse it now, but it’s the same thing that I’ve just said, the intro and the Beatitudes and our outline, which closes with warnings and conclusions.

This is our outline for today. We’re going to be looking today at some introductory points. We’re going to be looking at some opposites in the text that we need to look at, because this is one of those texts that I think that you have a tendency to think that Jesus is apothegmatic. He’s a master of sayings—pithy, short, wise sayings. But as we’ve been looking at The Sermon on the Mount, we discover that it’s not apothegmatic at all. What we have here is an intimately tied structure, larger sections woven together with themes and textual markers and so on.

So we have some opposites in the text that we need to look at that will help us to understand that it’s not apothegmatic, that we shouldn’t look at this in ways that are discrete and broken up. But we should look at this in terms of its whole message.

Then we’re going to think about *making a right judgment*. Then we’re going to consider *Fatherly encouragements*.

So our text today is Matthew 7:1-12, and I want us to read that together—well, not together. I want someone to read it and then you listen. Does somebody want to read it? Yes, please? Please go ahead. Matthew 7:1-12.

Participant: *“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*

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plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him? So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Jeff: Okay. Let me just put this structure back up for you. This is what we looked at the last time. And we noticed that there's *the treasure principle, a parable of the eye, and then encouragement*. That's the outline that we looked at the last time.

Today we're going to look at a similar pattern. In 7:1 and 2 we find a principle, that of judging. In 7:3-6 we find another parable of the eye. And then in 7:7-12 we find some encouragement from the Father. So in other words, what we find is a parallel structure here that I think is very important when we think about tying the sermon together and how we ought to think about it.

The other thing I want you to notice is this. I want you to notice that what we find at the end of the sermon in verses 7 to 12 parallels what we found at the beginning of the body of the sermon in 5:17. The Law and the Prophets are repeated. So that becomes our signature for the opening and the closing of the body of the sermon. So we are now at the end of the body of The Sermon on the Mount, and next time we'll look at those closing curses.

So that's just a glimpse of the structure that we're going to be thinking about as we persist. But let's think about some introductory points.

When we look at this text, one of the things that we are immediately confronted with is how many things that are in this text. One of the things that we have to ask ourselves is this. How do I know that I'm looking at this text rightly, because it looks like there are so many things. And this is what I was referencing earlier when I talked about those wise sayings. It looks like these are just one ox. For instance, in 7:1-2, you have statements about judging. And then in 3-6, well that looks a little bit like judging, but I'm not sure. And then you get this whole other section, an encouragement to ask. But ask for what? That's the question. It doesn't say what we're to ask for. Then you get the Golden Rule at the end. So all of these sort of discrete topics, how do we pull them all together? That's really the question.

And if we look at what I just showed you and say, “Okay, there's a structure that goes back to that last section, so it parallels this section,” I begin to think to myself, “Oh, okay, good. There must be something that ties all of these various topics together when I think about this text.”

So we need to understand the text and how it fits together, not just all of the discrete parts. And one of the things that I would say to you is this. If we could wrap it up and say what it is that brings unity to the whole text, I would say to you that it's *loving our*

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neighbor. And I say that because that has been our theme, right? Loving neighbor, loving God, loving God, loving neighbor. It’s our a., b., b., a. pattern. It’s our chiasm that I think our Sermon on the Mount is built upon. And so if we have to name it at the outset, without sort of giving our hand away, let’s just say that it’s loving our neighbor. This is a way to love our neighbor.

You know, the interesting thing, when you think about The Sermon on the Mount, and you think about the first two and then the last two, loving neighbor, loving God, loving God, loving neighbor, isn’t it interesting? You think about this, and the first two sections started with the practicing of righteousness. The last section started with charitableness toward our neighbor. And this one closes with judging our neighbor. So it’s really interesting how the themes weave themselves together. But I digress.

Let me just say this to you. I want to say this in general about loving our neighbor. What’s the first thing that you see when you meet a fellow Christian? What’s the very first thing that you see? If you see the sin in them rather than the Christ in them, then the problem is not necessarily with them. But it’s with you. And I think that one of the things that we have to keep remembering when we look at a text like this one, is that when I see my brother I need to see first and foremost—and it’s not that my brother doesn’t have his problems. And it’s certainly not that I don’t have my problems. But just like my brother needs to see Christ working in me, so I need to see Christ working in him. I think that when we look at a text like this one, I think that becomes a very foundational point that not only guides our thinking about this text, but also challenges us to think about others that we encounter.

So what do you see at first sight when you see your brother? Well we need to start with the opposites in the text. And I thought to myself that one of the things that I would do is to enlist an old friend that I’m sure we’ve all met before to help us with this. I thought I would bring us Elmo. *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: Elmo of “Sesame Street.”

Jeff: What are the opposites in the text? The opposites in the text are verses 1 and 2, “*Do not judge.*” At least that’s the way it looks. “*Do not judge.*” Verse 6: “should have judged.” *(Laughter)* Right? Should not judge, ooh, should have judged! We’ll work that out as we go along. But that’s where we see the opposites in the text.

Now I want to tell you something. I don’t know about you. I don’t know what your experience has been. But it has been years, it had been years, since I heard that phrase “Don’t judge me.” Remember that, when you were in high school and you were with your friends and you may not even have been Christians? But you did something and they knew you went to church. And then you said, “Don’t judge me!”, or they said that to you. Do you know what I’m talking about? I see a few head shakes.

Well we decided that we were going to send my son several years ago to Christian school. It has been several years ago because he’s twenty now. And I think we sent him in seventh grade.

So we sent him to Christian school. And he came home within two weeks. I said something to him and I corrected him. And he goes, “Don’t judge me.” *(Laughter)*

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I said, “Where did this come from?” This “don’t judge me” culture is alive and well within the church. It’s not just out in the world, you know?

And so we sent him to Christian school here and then we brought him home. And then we decided for various reasons that we were going to send him to a public school. So we sent him to public school. And lo and behold, he came home with the same phraseology. “Don’t judge me.”

I said, “Now wait a minute! I have a question for you. Does this mean in both settings? This is me and God. You have no business judging me. Is that what that means in both settings, son?”

He goes, “I’m not really sure. But I’m thinking so.” *(Laughter)*

Well that’s the culture. That’s the culture whether you’re in the church or outside of the church. Don’t judge me! This is between me and God. Even if what I am doing is wrong, who cares? It’s between me and God, as if God’s not going to say anything about it at any point in time.

But there’s another mindset when we look at this text, especially when we look at verses 1 and 2. We’re talking about not judging in these verses. When we look at verses 1 and 2, sometimes people are like this. No judging, no judgment, right? When you look at it, do you see it? Do you see that? *“Judge not, that you be not judged.”* So let’s just play it safe, everybody. It’s almost like it’s another way of salvation. I’m not going to judge you because if I judge you, then I know I’m going to be judged. So I’m not going to judge you. That’s kind of like your get out of jail free card. As long as I don’t judge, I won’t be judged. Play it safe.

Now you know, the more I think about these kinds of ways of thinking about 7:1 and 2, something in particular came to me that might be helpful to you. How many of you know “The Princess Bride?” Not nearly enough of you, a few of you. Well there’s a guy in “The Princess Bride.” And he’s a Spaniard looking for the six-fingered man who killed his father. And his name is what?

Participant: We’ve got an answer over here. He won’t speak up, though.

Jeff: What is it?

Participant: Inigo Montoya.

Jeff: Inigo Montoya. Now Inigo Montoya has a man that he’s initially working for who thinks he’s a very bright man. And in fact at one point in the movie he goes, “Have you ever heard of Plato, Aristotle? Morons!” *(Laughter) (Unclear)*

Well he says this word over and over again. And Inigo Montoya says, “I do not think that word means what you think it means.” *(Laughter)* Citing Matthew 7:1, I do not think it means what you think it means. *(Laughter)*

What does it mean?

Participant: Very good.

Jeff: I think it means the Golden Rule. In other words, I think that we are supposed to pull 7:12 up into our understanding at this point. But I’m not going to spend much time here because it’s going to come back around later. So when it comes back around later, we’ll pick it up and pull it up into what we’re discussing.

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But for now, I think that the way to understand what we’re looking at here is this. And it’s very simple. *“Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.”* In other words, if you would have somebody see Christ in you when they meet you and when they get to know you, then you had better see Christ in them when you get to know them, when you meet them, okay?

So what about verse 6? This is the man who should have judged. This is the man who has pearls in his pocket, remember? He has pearls in his pocket. He has pigs and a dog in front of him, and he throws the pearls down to the pigs and the dogs. He throws the holy things to the dogs and the pearls to the pigs. And they start chewing on them, and they realize that they’re breaking their teeth. And they what? And they turn on him and tear him to pieces. The man should have judged. Judgment is necessary.

When you have an angry pig bearing down on you, you should have judged. I think that’s a great one! *(Laughter)* All right. Yes, Don?

Don: Not only that, but what do you do with verse 14, which we’ll get to next week?

Jeff: What’s verse 14?

Don: *“Beware of false prophets.”* Isn’t that making a judgment?

Jeff: It is.

Don: How do you judge someone if you can’t possibly make that kind of judgment?

Jeff: It is. You know, you’re right, Don. And I think that right in the text you have these polar opposites. Don’t judge, or at least be careful how you judge. Apply the Golden Rule when you judge. And you should have judged.

I think we’re getting ahead of ourselves in our explanation of what 7:1 and 2 means when we say that we are pulling up the Golden rule into it, because typically people have come away from it saying, “Don’t judge me!” And I think it’s really interesting that in our culture and in our church that phrase is used as if you’re not supposed to judge me at all. But Don’s right. And not only is he right about passages that fall outside of the scope of our passage, but think about it. What would you say to a judge?

I mean, what would you say to a judge who rules on cases? It’s just ridiculous!

I’ll tell you what. If you’re Leo Tolstoy and you’re interpreting The Sermon on the Mount, do you know what he said? He said that society isn’t supposed to have beliefs, judges or anything like that. That’s what Jesus is actually teaching. So if we can get back to a society like that, then we’re going to have a society that Jesus commanded. Now I don’t know about any of you, but I’m going to have trouble with that, right? *(Laughter)* I don’t think that’s the teaching of the passage.

But here’s the question I have for you. What about the dogs and the swine and the pearls? This is kind of a big spot in this particular passage. What about them? I think we need to understand what those are.

And I’m not going to ask you what you think they are. And here’s why I’m not going to ask you. I’m not going to ask you because I think that sometimes when we get into talking about this, there can be some embarrassment.

I spoke one time at a conference. And I was going to speak on this very passage. And the guy who gave the pre- sort of talk to the talk stood up. And he thought he would help me out a little bit. And he thought he would explain to the crowd what the pearls and the

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swine and the dogs are in the text. He didn't ask me. So I didn't realize that I was going to say that what he had said was wrong. (*Laughter*). And I thought to myself. What do you do in that situation, you know? I mean, what do you do?

Participant: You change your message.

Jeff: You change your entire message. You know what I mean? I thought, “I can't do it. I gotta do it. I just hope people don't remember what he said.” (*Laughter*) Unfortunately, he remembered what he said.

So what are they? What are the dogs? What are the swine? What are the pearls? Well, here's what is typically said. Looking at all the commentaries, this is what is typically said. The dogs and the swine are the unbelievers, and the pearls are the gospel. And you don't throw your pearls to swine.

Now let me tell you the problem that I have with that. The problem that I have with that, as the bishop knows, is that you become the arbiter, the judge, of who gets the gospel and who doesn't. And I don't know about you, but I find a big problem with that.

Now I know what people will say. People will say something like this. They'll say, “Well, but you know, this is the person that you've shared the gospel with over and over and over again.” And I would say to you that that's reading into the text, because it looks to me like this is the first time that pigs ever ate a pearl. So you have to read that into the text in order to get it out of the text.

So what's the deal with dogs and pigs and pearls? What are they? Well I would say to you that there are some things in some stories that are left intentionally ambiguous. And they're left ambiguous so that we can see not something that they say because we have to make them say it, but they are left ambiguous because we are supposed to see another point.

I think that the point of this text is the crux, and not the animals and the pearls. What's the crux? The crux is the tension between verses 1 and 2 and verse 6. “*Judge not lest you be judged.*” “Should have judged.” The tension is the crux. The tension between those verses is the point. The pearls, the pigs, the dogs and who they are and what they are is not the point. The crux is the point.

So before I go on, I want to give you an opportunity to ask questions and interact with what I've said. But if I could summarize the crux, I would summarize it like this. *How can I make a right judgment?*, because verse 1 and 2 caution me in the judgments I make. And verse 6 tells me that I need to make judgments. So I'm driven to the question by the crux itself. How do I make a right judgment? Okay. What kind of questions do you have? What do you want to interact with up to this point? Go ahead.

Participant: So just saying this and putting it into context, when you say the Golden Rule, I think we would all agree that people in general have a tendency to be backbiting and critical of one another, but especially in the church.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: So what we need is grace to cover it. We all make mistakes. But if we're going to focus on everybody's weaknesses, that's going to create a critical community spirit.

Jeff: Yes.

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Participant: We need to have grace-filled community. But there are people who are contentious. No matter what you try to do with them, they will never get it. So I would see that as throwing pearls before swine. Here’s a person who I really want to try to talk to. But he’s just not going to listen. So eventually you have to say, “Okay, you know what? I’m just going to love him from a distance.” (*Unclear*)

Jeff: And your situation may be a really good application of how to make a right judgment, right? You’re evaluating the situation and applying wisdom to it, and saying, “I don’t know if it’s wise for me to keep pressing this person at this point. So I need to step back.” But I think that’s an application of the question of how do I make a right judgment, because of the crux that drives me to ask that. Yes, Bill?

Bill: As you were talking about this, it came to my mind that people say, “Do not judge,” a blanket statement. Well then, how can you determine what is right and what is wrong?

Jeff: Absolutely.

Bill: You can’t live your life based on the fact that I can’t make a decision of what’s right and what’s wrong. It’s as stupid as taking something as valuable as pearls and throwing them to pigs, or taking my Bible which is holy and giving it to a dog. I have a dog that loved to open Christmas presents. And if you gave him a Bible, do you know what he would do to it? (*Laughter*) He’d rip it to shreds.

Jeff: Yes, right. I saw somebody else. Yes?

Participant: There is a big difference between discernment and condemning.

Jeff: Yes, a big difference between discerning and condemning. There’s an application of wisdom in the one, and there’s judging without wisdom in the other, right? Well, not necessarily. There could be a judging with wisdom, condemning with wisdom.

Participant: The other thing about this passage where He tells us not to judge is that you first judge yourself. Take the log out of your own eye. Then you’ll see clearly.

Jeff: Hey, thanks a lot. Okay? You Just—(*Laughter*) Yes?

Participant: I was raised very critically, judging all the time. And I’ve learned over the past five or six years that it’s very simple. Before you can make a right judgment, you have to listen more.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And listen and listen, until you get to the crux and the deep root of it. And even then you can’t make a judgment. You have to kind of figure out how to impart something to them that will help them, you know?

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: They’re going through it; we’re not.

Jeff: Did you ever see—No, I can’t get into this.

Participant: Oh, come on! (*Laughter*)

Jeff: I can’t go there. You guys are already heading into making a right judgment. So let’s go into—Yes?

Participant: This is just a thought. In Jesus’ dealings with the Scribes and the Pharisees, it just seems like He was always blasting them.

Jeff: Yes.

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Participant: That’s what I’d call it. It doesn’t seem like He really opened up the Scriptures to them to try to reason with them. He didn’t try to do that.

Jeff: No, I think you’re right. And I’ll tell you what. It’s kind of the way I look at it. So I have this kind of demarcation between that Jesus said, “You guys should have already searched the Scriptures and known Me,” right? So the way He deals with the Pharisees, even Nicodemus when he comes to Him in John’s Gospel, is fairly straightforward. “*You are a teacher in Israel, and yet you do not know these things?*” It’s that kind of thing. And then with the woman at the well, He’s kind of gentle with her. He confronts her with her sin. But there’s a sort of a weaving around the barn before He gets to the punch line. He kind of lets her hang herself, you know.

And I kind of follow that. In my mind, when I meet somebody who has denied the gospel and is a minister of the gospel, I’m not very pastoral with him. I’m kind of no nonsense with him. But in the church I want to shepherd and bring people along and help them. I think that’s an application of what you’re saying where I think Jesus displays Himself. You’re right. When you meet somebody and he denies the gospel as a minister of the gospel, I look at him like “*You are a teacher in Israel, and yet you do not know these things?*” Does that make sense?

Participant: Yes.

Okay. So let’s think about *making a right judgment*. First of all, we have Jesus’ encouragement to do it. Do you remember what He says in 7:24 of John’s Gospel? And I’ll just read it to you because it’s important just to see Jesus say it, or hear Him say it. In John 7:24 He says, “*Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.*”

I think that what Jesus is saying—and we can go into more detail about what Jesus is saying—but I think that what we want to take out of it now is this. *We want to judge, but judge with caution*. If we don’t judge with caution, we judge on the basis of mere appearance. We have to get to the heart of the matter and we have to make a right judgment. And I think that Jesus is encouraging His hearers to do that.

Now I want you to think about the image for a minute. We have the image in the text that we’ve already been introduced to in verses 3-5. It’s the man who says, “You know, I see my brother over there with the speck in his eye. Meanwhile, I’ve got the log in my own eye,” right? “I’m going to go over and help him with that,” right?

That’s not going to work, right, because as I’m trying to get at him, I’m hitting him in the head. And it’s a humorous thing when you think about it, very humorous.

Transcriber’s Note: A cartoon.

Jeff: This is Jay Beagle. Remember when Latang’s stick got stuck in Jay Beagle’s visor? (*Laughter*) And I thought to myself, “Why didn’t he take the lid off as he goes back over to the bench?” Instead, he’s like this. (*Laughter*) But that’s a great illustration of Matthew 7:3-5. (*Laughter*) You know, hockey is so good for so many things. (*Laughter*) I digress. (*Laughter*)

How then do we make a right judgment? Well I’m going to stick with the text. I want us just to look at the things that are in the text. Are you good, Jordan? Did you get enough of that?

Jordan: Yes.

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Jeff: Because that brings back good memories, doesn't it? *(Laughter)*

How? Well the first thing that we need to do is to have some self-awareness. Now I want you to think about this a minute. It is so easy to think that Jesus here is talking about the bigness of sin. And really, it's interesting, right, because He flips it around from what we actually think. We actually think that well, I've got a speck in my eye. But I'm looking at the log in my brother's. And man, would you wave it to him? He needs help, right? I'm going to go help him, and I'll be able to see around the speck.

But Jesus flips it around, and He says, “No, no, no! He's got the speck and you've got the log.”

You know, isn't that interesting? We want to say to Him, “Wait a minute, Jesus! Let me explain the situation to You.”

But He says, “No, no, no! Let Me explain it to you! This is a general principle that I'm giving,” okay? We're going to get to the idea that sin needs to be dealt with. But right now Jesus is dealing with our heart and how we love our neighbor, how we interact with our neighbor.

And so the first thing that we need to do is to have some self-awareness. We need to remember that our own sin described by Jesus is more like a log that needs to be dealt with than a speck.

Now I want you to think about this. When you have that self-awareness—and you do as a Christian. You know how in Christianity it's so difficult because everything comes back to you. You're in prayer, and you say, “But God, You know what? Can I tell You something? Let me tell You something about this guy.” And then in your own mind you're going, “I do the same things.” You know, Christianity is so difficult because everybody is a sinner and it all comes back to you. You know, it does! And I think that we need to have self-awareness about our sin.

Here's the problem, though. We justify ourselves and we say, “Yeah, but mine's not really that big. Mine is small, and he really needs my help.” And so what? What do I do? I love him, and so I go to him. I have to show my love for him.

And Jesus is saying, “No, what you need to do is not only to have self-awareness, but you need to have some self-restraint.” Jesus is saying that when you have this picture of sin in your own life, and when it dawns on you that this is the picture of your sin, then you will have some self-restraint. Or at least you can cry out to the Holy Spirit to give you that self-restraint so that you'll deal with your own sin.

I have news for you. When you come to the realization that this is my sin that needs to be dealt with before I deal with the sin of my brother, and yet you are chomping at the proverbial bit to get your sin straightened around so you can go and straighten out your brother, your heart is not in the right spot. Yes?

Participant: Marriage and children are really good—

Jeff: All right. Third point. *(Laughter)* Our wives need us for their sanctification. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Do you tell your wife that? Do you tell Tabitha that? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Sorry, honey! *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

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Participant: A friend of mine shared this quote. I don’t know who originated it, but it says so much to what you’re saying. He said that we tend to hate those who sin differently than we do.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Great quote. Yes?

Participant: Would it be safe to say that if I am being judgmental or critical of a brother, and looking down my nose that I would never, that I am therefore not self-aware?

Jeff: We’ll get to that. Hold on to that, because that is a great question.

All right. And then I would say to you—go ahead, Frank. Yes?

Frank: What would you say about Luther, then?

Jeff: We’ll get to that. *(Laughter)* I look at that as kind of the same question. We’ll get to that. Hang in there. I would say that if we look at verses 3-5, what Jesus is telling us is that you need not only to have self-awareness and self-restraint, but you need to have *a plan for yourself*. And that’s what we talked about in being devoted to God, the sanctification process. That’s what I would say.

Why in the world? You know what? Shoulda got a—what is it that you have?

Participant: A what?

Jeff: Never mind. My Dell never wants to update.

Participant: You should have gotten an Apple.

Jeff: That’s it. *(Laughter)* Frank, here it is.

Transcriber’s Note: Someone’s phone ringtone plays a clip of the ‘60s song, *“If You Want to Be Happy for the Rest of Your Life,”* *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Anyway, I digress. *(Laughter)* You know what? When music hits me, there’s just something that comes over me! *(Laughter)* Anyway, if I must confront, there’s a way to do it, right? There is a way to confront. And I think that if there is sin, and I sit back and I evaluate, I’ve got to take Matthew 7 on board with me because it comes before Matthew 18. I’ve got to sit back and evaluate. And if it comes to that, notice what I have to do. I have to go with the log that may be in my own eye to the brother and confront him alone, one on one. And so often, brothers, we are not willing to do that. We’re not willing to do that. They’ll go everywhere else. They’ll go to other people and tell them how they’ve been wronged. They’ll jump steps and go right to the church and tell the church. But the bottom line is that Jesus says that if you’re good with the speck or the log in your own eye, in other words, if you are right before God and will be right before your brother, whatever your brother thinks, then you’ve got to go to him. And you’ve got to confront him with the sin. If he doesn’t listen, then you take someone else with you. And if he doesn’t listen then, then you take it to the church.

Participant: What are those verses in Matthew?

Jeff: 18:18 ff.

Participant: 18:15.

Jeff: 18:15? Well, I’ll take your word for it. Thank you. 18:15-20? What’s the parameter again?

Participant: 18:15-20.

Jeff: 15-20. Okay. But you still have to remove the log in your own eye. Now do you see? Brothers, listen to me for just a second. Verses 1 and 2: be cautious how you judge.

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Verse 6: you need to judge; you should have judged. The crux is be careful to make a right judgment. Verses 3-5 tell you how to go about being careful to make a right judgment. Do you see how 1-6 fit together? Do you see that? Okay. Maybe you don't. We don't have time. I have about all the time I can get.

All right. Now let me show you how these last verses fit. Notice what he says. He talks about what? He talks about *asking*—asking and knocking and seeking. But do you notice what's not revealed? What's not revealed is the gift that's given. It's not revealed. We make assumptions about what we are to ask for and what we will receive. But it's not in the text.

So here's what I would say to you. This is what I think is there. I think that what we are to ask for is *wisdom*. I think that we're to ask for wisdom because we need it with regard to these issues.

But that's not the only thing that we need to keep in mind. What we need to keep in mind is the *therefore*. Notice what He says. The *therefore*, that's the Golden Rule. So we're to ask for wisdom in order to apply the Golden Rule.

And then the last thing is the story. And I want to close with this because this is really important. And this is Jesus putting into practice what we see here.

Go to Matthew 18 for just a minute. Hopefully I have the right verses here. Okay. Matthew 18 verse 21 to the end of the chapter. You remember that this is the man who owes the king fifteen years of wages. And the king says, “Throw him in prison. Don't let him out until he pays the last amount.” And the man begs him. “*Have mercy on me.*” And so the king wipes out his debt.

And that man goes out and he finds his brother who owed him three months wages. And he says, “You owe me three months wages. Throw him in jail!” And the man begs him. “No, no, no! Please don't do it!”

“I don't care! Throw him in jail until he can pay the last penny!”

And then look at verse 33. This is the king saying this to the man who just threw his brother in jail. “*And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?*” There's the Golden Rule applied in the situation. Verse 35. “*So also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from the heart.*”

The idea, if you look into this text—and we can't go into all of it right now; I'll just say this to you—if you look at this text, here is a classic example of what we have in Matthew 7:1-12. It's an application of it. And I think that what you have is judging. You have the Golden Rule. You have wisdom in this situation not being applied and being applied. And it's interesting how Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, actually wraps up some of the teaching that he gives early in the text through stories that he gives later, like we saw the last time with the man who hired in the field and said, “Why are you upset with me that I have a good eye?” And I think we see that same thing here in this story. So that's all I have. Any questions? Don't?

Don: Jeff, you said that the specific gift is not mentioned.

Jeff: Yes.

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Don: In Luke 6—and I think this is another; I don’t think it’s the same sermon—it’s where Jesus says, *“If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”*

Jeff: Yes.

Don: Could that be part of this?

Jeff: Yes. I do think that is part of it. The Holy Spirit is the Giver of wisdom, right. I think it’s in 1 or 2 Corinthians chapter 2, where Jesus is said to be our wisdom?

Don: 1 Corinthians, yes.

Jeff: Is that 1 or 2?

Don: 1.

Jeff: Thank you, Don. I’ve got my Rolodex over there. *(Laughter)* So Jesus is said to be our wisdom. And we receive all that is Christ through the Holy Spirit. So that’s kind of how I would see that. Yes, that’s exactly right.

Participant: In our community, when we have an expectation and then there’s an experience of a gap, when we fall short, isn’t that our tendency to have suspicion and to be critical, instead of saying, “Help me understand and think the best?”

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: But as Christians, that’s the challenge. We always go to the bottom line. And we need to be thinking of that, and not be judgmental, give grace and love and understanding. And we’re all going to fail each other. So we’ve got to help each other and lovingly support each other.

Jeff: Yes. That’s right.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Amen.

Participant: Jeff, I may take some liberties here. But it seems to me that everything about our life stands out and we get wisdom, whether it’s from our parents when we’re young, or when we’re in college, or whether we study the Gospels or think about the law. It seems like it’s always leading us toward making the right judgment, judging right from wrong, judging what to do in this situation, judging how to interpret the Bible and the gospel.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: So it seems to me that we’re always making judgments and we’re always being led toward that point of what’s the right judgment to make in this situation because of the wisdom we gain.

Jeff: Yes. And I think that you’ve hit on something that the Christian generation in which we live is really clawing, you know? We’ve been taught for so long that there’s a bull’s-eye that we have to hit in terms of God’s will. And we’ve forgotten the whole idea that there’s wisdom, and that God gives general parameters in many cases. And expects us to judge wisely in a particular instance. And so I think you’ve hit something valuable. Anybody else? Why don’t we pray then, and we’ll close.

Father in heaven, thanks again for this day, for the time You’ve given to us. Father, You’ve challenged us to search our own hearts, to be cautious in the way that we judge. And Father, we pray that You will help us not only to make right judgments, but also to

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deal rigorously with ourselves before You and before men. And Father, we ask and pray that You'll do this not only for the good of Your church and Your glory, but we pray that You'll do it for our own good, for we need it. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Men: Amen. Thank you. (*Applause*)