

“A Different Way” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Epiphany 7 February 23, 2025

- I. **Luke 6:37-38** – ³⁷“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you.
- II. **Most of us do not believe we are judgmental people.**
 - a. I read about a pastor named John Burke of a church down in Austin, Texas who tried an experiment of going a whole week of keeping track of his judgments about other people.
 - b. Pastor Burke looked back over his week and came to the conclusion that being judgmental was not only normal in his life but realized that he *liked* the feeling... because he felt like he was superior.
 - i. In his words, “Judging others makes you feel good, and I’m not sure I’ve gone a single day without this sin. In any given week, I might condemn those ‘idiotic people’ who do silly things. Most reality TV shows are full of people I can judge as sinful, ignorant, stupid, arrogant, or childish. I get in my car and drive and find a host of inept drivers who should have flunked their driving test... At the store, I stand in the shortest line, which I judge is way too long because of all the people with more than 10 items in the ‘10 items or less’ checkout—*what’s wrong with you people?*”
 - ii. Finally, he ends by saying, “Judging is our favorite pastime, if we’re honest—but we’re not! We’re great at judging the world around us by standards we would *highly resent* being held to! Judging makes us feel good because it puts us in a better light than others.”
 - c. I also challenged myself to pay attention to judging others this week... and I learned something about myself.
 - i. When I’m in a good mood or have a good attitude, I’m much more tolerant and less likely to judge people.
 - ii. When I’m in a bad mood, in a hurry, or impatient, I’m not very tolerant of others and much more likely to judge them.
 1. Just like Pastor Burke, it’s a good feeling or it pumps up the pride to judge others – but it’s a false and sinful way to feel better.
 2. Isn’t pride the problem?
 - a. If we judge someone’s driving, what we’re really thinking is that our driving is great, and no one would ever think of us as bad drivers!
 - b. If we judge someone for meandering through the grocery store and blocking the aisle without a care... We’re thinking that we are much more considerate.

- c. If we're judging another member of the church for their attendance, or for their personal choices, or their family life... We're thinking that we're good at all those things...
 - d. Pride says I'm better, and therefore it gives us a little sense of superiority... and it feels good.
 - d. Jesus isn't about that... and He certainly puts pride in its place.
- III. **Today's Gospel lesson is also known as "The Sermon on the Plain"**
 - a. Just as in the Gospel of Matthew and the Sermon on the Mount, Luke has a similar account of Jesus preaching to a huge crowd, but on a flat place.
 - b. His teaching is a very different way to think about life and how God wants us to live.
 - i. As Christians, when we are attacked for our faith Jesus says... love your enemies... do good to those who hate you... turn the other cheek... give more than they demand of you.
 - ii. "And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them." (v 31)
 - iii. Do not judge... do not condemn... do not withhold forgiveness.
 - c. I don't know about you, but all of these commands are really difficult to follow... which is exactly what Jesus has in mind.
 - i. No one can be full of pride when they follow these directions from Jesus because they are all about setting aside the ego and our desires in order to shine Christ's love into the world.
 - ii. When we hear the words of Jesus describing these attacks from enemies and those who hate us... it's not very hard to imagine the journey Jesus took to the cross.
 - 1. In many ways, Jesus is helping His followers to understand that Christians do not react to things like others do, because when we love others like we would want to be loved, we are showing the world that Christ lives.
 - 2. In doing the exact opposite of what our sinful heart wants to do, we are showing that Christ lives in us.
 - 3. In swallowing our pride and seeing others as our merciful Father sees them, we are showing Christ to the world.
 - d. The high bar that Jesus sets for His followers is a glimpse into the suffering and death of our Savior.
 - i. As His enemies scorned Him, mocked Him, struck Him over and over, and took His clothes, and executed Him on the cross... He did not strike back but even forgave them as He hung on the cross watching the soldiers cast lots for His garments. (Luke 23:34)
 - ii. Jesus went the way of the cross so that our sins of pride and judgment would not have the final say... but we are forgiven.
 - iii. The sins that have us looking upon others as less than were taken upon Jesus and nailed to the cross.

- iv. The lack of mercy that we show those around us is swallowed up by the mercy and forgiveness of our Lord and Savior.

IV. **The reality is that we can live in a different way.**

- a. God came to us – most of us when we were little babies at the baptismal font – and gave us faith to trust and follow Him.
 - i. The Bible says that we live our lives in a different way when we are baptized and have Christ in us – hear what Romans 6 says about our new life in Christ:
 - 1. “³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin.” (Romans 6:3-7)
 - 2. Indeed, we have new lives that are set free from the bondage of sin – and we no longer have to look at the words of Jesus as impossible – but “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)
- b. Rather than looking down on people, Jesus always looked upon others with mercy and love – which is now what we do as well.
 - i. When someone is driving in ways that make us frustrated, we can consider the possible trials and struggles they face and pray for them.
 - ii. When a person isn’t paying attention in the store, rather than judging them as inconsiderate, we can patiently speak to them or even ask if they need help.
 - iii. If our Christian brothers or sisters aren’t living up to our standards, maybe we can consider the struggles we had as we did our best to live for Jesus and failed many times... and maybe we can be a friend to encourage them in their struggles.
- c. The judgment we cast upon others to lift ourselves up becomes less of a challenge when we are merciful and lift others up with the love of God.
- d. Through Christ’s mercy and forgiveness, we are set free from the chains of pride and judgment, as we see others as our Heavenly Father sees them.
- e. The world knows that Christ is alive and well when we treat them in a different way... the way of Christ. Amen.

¹ Source: John Burke, *Mud and the Masterpiece* (Baker Books, 2013), pp. 60-61