

Sermon: How to Evaluate Others

Text: Luke 6:37-45

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Introduction: Growing up in the 60's was an exhilarating and also an especially dangerous time spiritually. I have to admit that there seemed to be more than enough temptation to go around. There was also plenty of controversy and unrest. The Beatles were saying they were more popular than Jesus. The wrong concept of "free love," in other words, sexual encounter without responsibility or obligation, was a prevalent sentiment. Illicit drug and alcohol abuse was a part of the mix. And the Vietnam war became a cause for great national angst and divided families.

There was a group of people back then that were called "hippies." They seemed to reject everything that "good" people stood for. Lumped together with hippies was anyone who had long hair, used drugs, wore paisley and bell-bottoms, listened to weird music, was sexually promiscuous, and was a peace-loving, tree-hugging liberal. Once they all seemed to come together in Woodstock, NY. That sound about right?

Back then you were looked at with suspicion if you could be described in even one of those ways. One day, Dr. Henderson made fun of me because of my long hair. He was the coach for baseball and basketball at LCC. And also in the late 60's I was given \$50.00 more per month to go to work for Hobart Corporation if I would only shave my beard. That was like about \$60.00 more a week in today's money.

I am glad that these kind of issues have disappeared today, right? Now I am not here today promoting hippies or bad grooming or even the latest objectionable practices. I am here to investigate this passage in Luke that we have before us, today:

Luke 6:37-45 (NIV) ³⁷"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." ³⁹He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹"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? ⁴²How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. ⁴³"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

⁴⁴Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

Let's clear up some possible misunderstandings here.

Q. Whom is Jesus primarily addressing here?

A. The Pharisees. Also Luke wants the church to hear this dressing down so they will not take a similar position.

Q. Is Jesus prohibiting making evaluations of spiritual issues or people here?

A. Absolutely not.

So what is Jesus saying?

I. Judgment Is Reciprocal (vv. 37-40).

What goes around, comes around. A person reaps what they sow. He is saying:

A. Do not judge or condemn. - literally stop judging, stop condemning, or "stop criticizing" (Williams)

James 4:12 (NIV) ¹²There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

I believe one of the finest things that can be said about someone's life is they never have a bad word to say about anyone.

Only God is truly capable to judge another or condemn him. One reason is our Heavenly Father is the only One who can evaluate our hearts. He alone knows our intentions.

The other reason is one of perspective. God sees the whole picture.

Illus. About 1995 we planted a field with sunflowers in Michigan. We took pictures twice. The first time we parked cars around on the property to make a cross. Most people saw it as it was being organized, but not in its final form. They were probably distracted by the Michigan State Patrolman in his car with lights flashing where my son was pulled over on the property. Because David was late he felt it necessary to accumulate more points on his license (29 points at one time, possibly a new record).

Later in the year when the sunflowers were full-grown and loaded with birds gorging themselves on the plentiful seeds you still could not determine what all the sunflowers were about - that is unless you went up and took pictures in an airplane. Then from that perspective it became clear.

God, from his perspective, sees everything clearly. He alone is capable in that area.

B. Do offer forgiveness and be generous.

Our lives as Christians are to reflect our Savior. We are to reflect His image so others can see Jesus (God) in us! It because of what has been accomplished in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) ³²Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

We are to teach by deed and by example just like the Apostle Paul who said:

Titus 2:7-8 (NIV) ⁷In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

In part, we forgive because “God honors a compassionate spirit.” - Bock, p. 192

Those who are forgiving and generous are those in the *Sermon on the Mount* who are blessed because they demonstrate mercy. There must be some question about one’s citizenship in God’s kingdom if we claim allegiance to the King, yet do not do what He does.

The reason for forgiveness rather than criticism is to multiply disciples. That said, there may be a need for a correction here. Jesus is not asking us to be tolerant or accepting of sin. We are to love unconditionally, but that does not mean unconditional approval of ungodliness and immorality. Still we say with the unknown author:

Lord help me be kind and forgiving--
So oft Your forgiveness I’ve known
For sins I have daily committed;
Lord, grant me a love like Your own.

The text says that whatever you use for measuring out judgment, it will be used in your case.

Judgment Is Reciprocal, so

C. Choose a healthy example.

Luke 6:39(NIV) ³⁹He also told them this parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?”

Certainly a blind man cannot lead anyone effectively or safely. The results would be disastrous in the physical realm, and even more destructive in the spiritual realm.

Jesus often refers to the Pharisees as blind guides. These religious leaders are even ignorant to the reality of God in their very presence. They oppose the One whom they say they represent.

Luke 6:40 (NIV) ⁴⁰A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

If you want to go far and do well in life, it is critical to choose good models. A teacher cannot share what he does not know. That, of course, is also true of his pupils.

Jesus is warning against self-righteousness and pride, spiritual arrogance that will always alienate you from God.

I Peter 5:5bc (NIV) All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

II. Judgment Is Restorative (vv. 41-42).

A. Involves self-evaluation.

It’s like someone who has extreme bad breath telling you about oral hygiene.

II Corinthians 13:5 (NIV) ⁵Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

In the movie *Chocolat* it seems, sadly enough, in many of the scenes that the most Christian-acting character is an avowed atheist. One of the other characters is the head of the village. He is called “Count.” In the story he takes on the task of mentoring the parish priest (Pere Henri). He speaks through the young cleric to voice what he is against. The Count also tries to help a man, who was abusive to his wife, become a good husband. Throughout this story the village leader is always trying to point out deficiencies, alert people to immorality, while treating those who disagree with contempt. Toward the conclusion of the show it is found out that the Count’s marriage is a sham and his own personal life, a mess.

Jesus uses highly hyperbolic talk to describe a man who would give advice and criticize others about a speck of sawdust (a minor impediment) when the more significant problem was the beam in his own eye.

There was a woman who complained her neighbor's windows were always dirty. One day, after complaining about them to a friend, the visitor encouraged her to wash her own windows. She followed the advice. The next time her friend visited, she exclaimed, "I can't believe it. As soon as I washed my windows, my neighbor must have cleaned hers too. Look at them shine."

Judgment Is Restorative and

B. Involves help rather than harm.

Jesus is not saying: don't help your brother, but make sure your own house is in order first. And at the end of the day it is all about motives. Are we trying to elevate ourselves by comparison or elevate others by *truly* helping them?

Luke's point is that "the disqualifying factor is not flaws but blindness to one's flaws, an unwillingness to be self-critical and honest with oneself." - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 92

There are biblical standards for helping a brother who is sinning. It is progressive in its approach.

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV) ¹⁵"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

But church discipline is always intended to produce repentance and restoration even for the worst of sins.

I Corinthians 5:4-5 (NIV) ⁴When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

III. Judgment Is Revelatory (vv. 43-45).

The idea of fruit in this section is in the context of speaking. Do your words create or destroy? Are they helpful or hurtful? Accountability must start with self, and our mouth becomes a litmus test for our faith and relationship with God.

A. Bad hearts produce bad fruit.

“We can say we are an orange tree for a season, but at harvest time what is in the heart will finally reveal what kind of fruit we really are.” (from a sermon by Ron Ritchie entitled “How Can We Know If We Are Genuine Christians?”)

Jesus was saying that people like the Pharisees will only produce bad fruit. They do not have a proper relationship with God, and people who follow their example will only find death and destruction.

Matthew 12:33 (NIV) ³³“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

The Pharisees were like when you bite into a seemingly perfect apple and notice half a worm inside. Jesus also said about them:

Matthew 23:27-28 (NIV) ²⁷“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry he talked about the importance of good fruit.

B. Good hearts produce good fruit.

It is the seed of the Word that produces good fruit. A heart that has been fully given to God will show itself in good fruit. Jesus makes it clear that it is a relationship with Him and the Father that makes this possible.

John 15:1-4 (NIV) ¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Conclusion: We have previously learned there is a way to be what Jesus wants for his disciples:

Luke 6:31 (NIV) ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:36 (NIV) ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

In following these commands, which should be principles for our lives, we will allow *God* to judge or condemn others. There is nothing wrong with pointing out someone else's problems if you have conducted a God-led self-evaluation.

We need to offer what our Lord gives: grace, forgiveness, and correction which is meant to help produce a good heart. Yet only God can change our true nature from a bad tree to a good one.

If we are truly a part of God's family, it will be shown not so much in what we judge, but in what kind of fruit we produce.