

Sermon for July 12, 2009

Boscobel & Mt. Zion UMCs

Text: Matthew 7:1-11

Title: "Judgment and Prayer"

Introduction: As we begin this Mini Worship Series called, "Handling Problem People", I want you to take a few seconds and just think about it: is there someone or more than one someone in your life that you consider a problem? They annoy you. They irritate you. They make you mad. They get under your skin. They always know just the right thing to say to get you steaming...

Now, I know that some of you are good Christians and you are not possibly going to think that of ANY person. You're thinking, "Well, they might annoy me a little, but I wouldn't call them a "PROBLEM", Pastor Stan. I know all about forgiveness and mercy and grace and all that stuff..."

If that's you ... Knock it off! If you don't have someone in your life that bothers you, you need to get out more!

Jesus would not have given us lessons on how to handle certain people (including ourselves) if human beings weren't somewhat difficult at times! So, please stop pretending that you are different from every other person in the world.

What we are going to find in this two week series from the Sermon on the Mount is that Jesus wants us to handle some things in life different than what comes natural for us!

Some of you will remember that our last series was called, "Jesus and the Matrix". That series was about the religious landscape that Jesus found himself in early in the 1st Century. That religious landscape had, for the most-part, been set by the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the leading religious group in Palestine/Israel around the time that Jesus was here on earth.

This morning and next week, we are going to take a look at some choice words by Jesus as he preached the best sermon ever; the Sermon on the Mount. Please understand that much of what Jesus had to say in the Sermon on the Mount was in response to the present religious Matrix that the Pharisees had set up. So, much of what Jesus says here is to change what was the norm! Needless to say, the Pharisees were problem people to Jesus and what He was attempting to do on earth.

Okay, this week's scripture comes from Matthew 7. Jesus has just finished in chapter 6 teaching the people to not let anyone know when they were fasting (going without food); he teaches about what God wants us to do with our money and then, right before where we pick up our reading for today, Jesus teaches the people listening that WORRYING is another way to say to God, "I don't trust You!"

Now into Matthew 7 where Jesus begins wrapping up the Sermon on the Mount:

READ MATTHEW 7:1-11 NOW AND PRAY!

- I. Judging Others (vs. 1-5)
 - A. Don't do it! Judgment = Get off the playground! This is the judgment that tears others down so that we feel better about ourselves...

1. The Pharisees were notorious for judging the people that were not as 'good' as they were.
 2. Remember that we know that they had critical hearts and Jesus said that he could not work with someone who had a critical heart.
 3. What Jesus is condemning here when he says, "Do not judge others..." is the harsh judgment we sometimes give others and maybe an unjust criticism
 - a. I am amazed at how often I hear people judge another person's actions without knowing all of the details.
 - b. Please know that for most situations, there is always one more fact in a person's life that we don't know about!
 - c. Let that ring in your ears for awhile even as you deal with a person who irritates you!
 4. Don't miss this ... Jesus says that we will be treated in our Judgment the same way that we treat others.
 - a. In other words, if I take time to dig out dirt on other people so that I can talk about them or put them down, Jesus is going to judge me in the same manner.
 - b. I don't know about the rest of you, but it wouldn't take Jesus long to find some dirt on me. I'm not sure I want Jesus looking too hard.
 - c. The standard that I use in judging other people is the standard that God will use in judging me!
 - d. I'll tell you what ... if that's the case, why don't we all just love the daylights out of each other, no matter what we think other people's motives are...
- B. Logs and Specks ... 2nd Reason not to Judge Others
1. When we have critical hearts, we spend so much time looking for dirt in other people's business that we don't have time to get our own lives cleaned up!
 2. I love how Jesus uses the ridiculous here to get his point across. I'm sure some of the people listening were chuckling as they pictured a person with a whole log sticking out of their eye.
 3. How ridiculous it would be to try to help someone else out when you're dealing with that (log in eye trying to help someone else ... act it out?)
 4. So, we should always be judging ourselves according to what we know about Who God Is and Who God Wants us to be!
 - a. "Is what I'm doing or about to do going to please God or make God mad?"

- b. This is a great question to ask. There is not much that we do that God is neutral on ... flavor of Blizzard?
- 5. But, don't miss what else this says. It says that we should take care of the log in our own eye; "then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."
 - a. Got it? We are still supposed to help our friends out with their struggles. As long as we have judged ourselves first to make sure we are right with God, we still need to help other people in their faith journey!
 - b. Hear this: We are supposed to judge other people ... not with intention to put them down like the Pharisees (critical hearts) did, but in order to build them up!
 - c. We judge our sisters and brothers in Christ by their fruit (what are they producing). Are people around them getting to know Jesus Christ because of how they talk and live or not?!?
 - d. If another follower of Christ is not living their life pleasing to God, we need to be available to, with all kindness and gentleness, pull the speck out of their eye!
 - e. Jesus tells us that this faith is designed so that we need each other! Some say that they don't need to worship with other people or that they don't need to talk about their faith in order to have it ... Jesus just said differently!

II. Pearls to Pigs (vs. 6)

- A. Why Would Jesus include verse 6 here?
 - 1. Pigs don't care about pearls!
 - 2. Pigs were considered a very dirty animal in Jesus' time too ... Jewish people will not eat pigs. They are ritually unclean!
 - 3. So, here is a dirty animal that is not smart enough to know the value of pearls (diamonds, jewels, etc.).
 - 4. Jesus puts this here, again, because we need to judge people!
 - 5. Jesus said that we are supposed to share our faith in Jesus with everyone "Go into all the world and make disciples..." BUT, he also told his Disciples to leave towns and shake the dust off their feet when people wouldn't listen ... Don't waste your time!
- B. Discernment = "Keenly Selective Judgment"
 - 1. We need to have "Keenly Selective Judgment" when we share with people about Jesus Christ.
 - 2. We are not to judge others, but we do need to be careful about how we share holy things! "Pearls" are Biblical Truths!

3. Yes, we are going to go into all the world, but we are not going to cheapen the Word of God by sharing it with people who do not want to listen. Why waste our breath?
 4. The “pigs” that Jesus is talking about are the Pharisees ... people who profess a faith in God, but have never actually gone before Jesus, confessed their sins and asked for forgiveness...
- III. Persistence Counts (vs. 7-11)
- A. Keep on Asking, Seeking and Knocking
 1. Jesus finishes this section with some words about PRAYER.
 2. Why? Well, I don’t know about you, but I need help from God to obey the things that God asks me to do!
 3. Christianity is not an EVENT. Christianity is a JOURNEY. Day after day we are supposed to GROW in our faith. We have to stay in touch with God about that!
 4. “Ask” God to help us stop judging people ignorantly.
 5. “Seek” what God sees in us (a log) that needs removed.
 6. “Knock” and the doors of opportunity to help others in their faith journey will be opened to you!
 - B. Parents and Children
 1. I love how Jesus reminds us that God will take care of us IF WE ASK!
 2. If we human beings, who fall way short of perfection, give good things to our kids ... bread instead of a stone; a fish instead of a snake ...
 - C. Your Father in Heaven
 1. ... How much more will God (who is perfect) give to us if we ask!
 2. Jesus has challenged those people to *not* do what comes natural for all of us (judging other people)!
 3. Jesus has challenged those people to do what does *not* come naturally (discern who is ready to hear about a faith in God)!
 4. Then, Jesus finishes with, “I know that these are hard lessons, but remember: God meets the needs of His children.”
 5. In other words, keep asking, seeking and knocking and God will help us live out this faith ... even with difficult people!

Next Week: Revenge and Love!

Let’s Pray!