

*Sermon on Matthew 7:1-12 prepared by Jonathan Shradar*

Sunday morning confession - I am a hypocrite. I, more often than I'd like, expect people to live as I say, not as I do. In fact, I am likely to judge people based on a standard I am unwilling to follow myself. When others sin it is significant, when I sin it is minimized. I don't extend grace but demand it for myself.

I don't want to be like this. But it is a nearly daily battle to kill the hypocrisy in me, and to humbly come to Jesus in need, and love even my enemies the way the Savior calls us to.

I wonder if this is your experience too?

If so, I have some great news for you. We can be free of it by seeking Jesus and realizing how he treats us. The normative ways of existence don't have to remain living in The Way of Jesus. As kingdom citizens you are called to a life without hypocrisy and given the tools, the strength to live it.

**Jesus loves hypocrites.**

**Matthew 7:1-12**

This is a unique teaching. As I read this I wondered if Jesus had anyone get up and walk out during this section of the Sermon on the Mount. We are not all that different from the first audience here, so we might instinctually expect and want this section to go differently.

“Go ahead and judge everyone around, the closer they are to you the more important your judgment. Elevate yourself in comparison to every soul you encounter, so that you can stoke a self-righteousness unrivaled by the Pharisees. It is up to you to point out all the wrong, especially in other believers. Look to outsiders for comfort and affirmation. Make your own way, and take what you deserve. Make sure everyone knows when they fail to treat you according to your expectations...”

It's silly. But the flesh would prefer it.

But as we have become familiar, the kingdom ethic strikes a different chord. And The reason Jesus' teaching fires up the religious elite and the Gentile occupiers is that it lays aside all of their notions of how life should look.

The Way does life differently, it is now in Christ a life of throwing off the weight of hypocrisy and instead loving with a boundless love that can only be found in Jesus.

That's what we want to wrestle with this morning as we hear Jesus landing his sermon with this exhortation to a life defined by the Father's love and grace to us.

Jesus loves hypocrites... but he doesn't leave us that way.

### **1) Slay Hypocrisy**

“Judge not, that you be not judged.” This is something. It can be easy to mishear what Jesus is saying. Some have taken it to mean you should never judge anyone or anything. Making life a utopian judgment-free zone! Libertarian ideal!

But the context is key because as he concludes the sermon Jesus will tell his followers to evaluate, judge a tree by its fruit, guarding against false prophets and those that would claim to be disciples but have no part in the kingdom.

Don't judge the way you have been judging. Don't create a standard for others that you are not willing to maintain yourself.

We are to be paying attention, seeing specks in the eyes of brothers, but also in our own eyes. “With the measure you use it will be measured to you.”

Jesus crashing the party for the critical spirit of the age. Calling out hypocrisy.

We are experts at it. It is an art form in our day, as it was then.

*Newsom* example: Should be held accountable. Friend railing while he hasn't lived by the standard.

We love to uncover the hypocrisy in others because it makes ours more okay. Jesus will have none of it! Judging a brother more harshly than you judge yourself - you hypocrite!

While our war on hypocrisy in our hearts will have an effect in how we encounter and engage the world, Jesus here has zoomed in on the kingdom, relating to one another within the church. He even says not to throw what is holy, pearls, before dogs and pigs (Gentiles, those outside the community of the clean).

How can you say to your brother 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you have a log in your eye!

We are meant to challenge and correct each other in the church but we do so with the humility to recognize, and deal with, our own hypocrisy.

This is a vital reality of kingdom community - we are not left to ourselves. When we believe a brother/sister has our best interest in mind, we gladly receive rebuke. Oppositely, We don't want specks floating in our own eyes, and if we really love our brother we want to remove specks from his eye too.

"Jesus does not tell us to ignore our brother's faults. Jesus does not teach tolerance for sin anywhere in the sermon. Jesus is not telling us to leave things alone, to just go along, to take it easy about sin, to let injustice go on its merry way. He's not telling us that moral specks don't matter because they are only specks... this is Jesus' instruction - that we act in a way that will bring real justice in places where there is injustice and evil. We do this not by refusing to resist evil, but refusing to resist by evil means. We participate in the advance of the kingdom of heaven when we overcome evil with good." Peter Leithart

Jesus wants more for his followers so he says first clean your eye, deal with your sin in **repentance** that they will be receptivity in the community.

"Discipleship does not afford us a point of vantage from which to attack others; we come to them with an unconditional offer of fellowship, with the single-mindedness of the love of Jesus." Bonhoeffer, *Costs of Discipleship*

It is sensitive work! Why he describes the eye. *My own real speck of wood in my eye (painful, distracting, not sure I could have helped anyone else).*

"The remedy to a judgmental attitude is an understanding of one's own need for spiritual healing, for righteousness, and for mercy. The pride that feeds the hypocrisy Jesus criticizes here may be the "log" in our eye. And he provides relief for it, a way out.

### **Jesus loves hypocrites... but he doesn't leave us that way.**

Instead of judging with an air of self-righteousness, he says seek the help you need in him.

### **2) Seek Christ**

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find..." Rolling from the exhortation to "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Jesus wants us to look beyond ourselves for the forgiveness and strength we need to slay hypocrisy.

This is not the key that unlocks temporary treasures of our world - riches and no stitches - but it is the provision he has promised and the response to our poverty of spirit, our need and thirst for righteousness.

In the seeking, we realize how the Father treats us. Proving that God doesn't work the way our hypocrisy does. We awaken to the reality that we can run to him because he doesn't treat us the way we treat others.

He is a giver. Jesus describes a good father, responding to the needs of his children and says if we who are evil know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will the Father in heaven give good things, lasting, righteous things.

*Christmas lists* - not getting everything on the list, but also won't get anchovies!

How much more will this divine loving Father care for us?! This is God who gives good things to those who ask him.

The good things as the equipping to repent and slay sin in ourselves. And I think that because of Luke's account of the sermon.

**Luke 11:13** “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (ESV)

The comforter, the advocate, the helper, shows us ourselves and pours the love of the Father into our hearts. Giving us what we need to live the kingdom ethic - for the glory of Christ.

This is why we can come to Jesus in repentance - because we know mercy, grace, and love are the response. The Father gives provision and purpose.

**Come to him**, seek him. Plead for the vision and strength to wage war on our hypocrisy.

**Hebrews 4:16** “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (ESV)

What are you in need of today? The ability to see your log, to take it out. Seek Jesus, his Spirit for help. This is the way of getting right and getting on with the life he has called us to.

All who seek will find. And when we do, we show Christ.

### **3) Show Christ**

“So whatever you wish others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

The Golden Rule. Treat others, inside the kingdom and out, like you want to be treated. Like Jesus treats you. Then they will see Jesus in you. Then the kingdom will grow.

We have lived for far too long going through the motions of cultural expectation. Judging, eyes closed to our hypocrisy, or stuck in relativism that says they sinned so I can too... Jesus says all that I have taught leads here. To do to others what you wish they would do to you.

The Law and the Prophets - that which Jesus came to fulfill is the way of living as those slaying hypocrisy, seeking Christ, and showing him to the world.

**Jesus loves hypocrites... but he doesn't leave us that way**, and because that is true, we can **start again**. It's a new day. To live gracious, finding Jesus, receiving his Spirit as the good gift he is and showing the world his way.

From the stark warning against misapplied judgment to the care of the Father, we have hope to live this kingdom ethic that his glory would fill the earth as the waters do the sea.

"God has judged Jesus in our place. If we are united to Christ through his cross, our end-time judgment is already behind us. We are therefore liberated from judging others, because of our lavish exoneration through the free grace of Christ."

Loved, transformed, given purpose in the kingdom. This is for you.

I couldn't help but reflect on the life and ministry of John Newton... some said he had two conversions - one to Christ, and one out of hypocrisy. He was moved by the Spirit to leave the slave trade and to preach the grace of Christ.

"Amazing grace  
How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost  
But now I'm found  
Was blind, but now I see"

I am a hypocrite, but I won't always be. I need you to help clear the specks and logs - just as you need each other for it. It is where freedom is. It is where grace is realized. It is where Jesus is glorified. These are the pearls we cling to, the bread we are provided.

Let's live this.