

Sermon: Judge Not

New North Church, Hingham

Mr. John MacNeill

8 August 2021

Based on **Matthew 7:1-12**

As I have said numerous times, I cannot just sit down and write a sermon. I have to get some message that what you are hearing today is going to be the topic for this day. It is not some booming voice from Heaven, it did not come from the lectionary and no other human told me what to say. So please bear with me.

It seems to me that we as humans are prone to passing judgement on others for their dress, their political opinion, the color of their skin, their nationality or any things that may come to mind at the moment.

I can remember attending a church in Nashville that my landlord invited us to visit. It was a nice church, well attended, but it was missing a musical instrument of any description. A man stood up, announced the hymn, sang the beginning pitch and then led the acapella singing. It sounded really good! The message wasn't bad either.

At the end of the service, a lady came over to us and welcomed my wife and me. The next words from her were, "are you saved?" to which I gave a positive reply. She said, "Praise the Lord, what church do you go to?" I told her we attended a Methodist church, to which her reply was, "Oh, you're going to Hell you know." My question to her was, "Do you know your Scriptures?" Her reply, "I am proud to say I know my Scriptures very well!" Must have forgotten about pride, but I asked this: "What about, 'Judge Not Lest Ye Be Judged'"? She rapidly scurried away. Who was she to judge whether or not I was on the Lord's side?

Admittedly, this is not a common affront today, but we condemn people for any number of things.

I met a man two weeks ago. I knew nothing about him, so I introduced myself, tried not to be too nosy and found out he was from Ethiopia. If you know anything about Ethiopia, you know that it has a long history of internal violence. During our conversation, he told me that there was a group similar to Hitler's Youth Corps and he had been a member. Among the people who visited his camp was Fidel Castro. This was a man who had escaped and made his way here many years ago. He studied, did well, and is now a practicing attorney. I could have minded my

own business, wondered who this very tall black man was and said to myself, “You don’t want to know him”. Incidentally, none of the others there made any attempt to speak with him. That was their loss!

We have had an elderly gentleman attend our St. John’s Masonic observances in our church. He must be at least 6’5” tall and speaks with a German accent. What would be your reaction if you knew he had been a member of Hitler’s Youth Corps? As he was growing up, all of the youth were forced to join. What he learned was very foreign to his upbringing. He has told me about the bombings and how his neighbor’s home was destroyed. He also told me how he was able to escape and work his way to the United States. Much of his family stayed in Germany, though not as participants.

I tell you about these two men who endured severe hardships, but there are many others who are living lives full of conflict who may even be folks you know. This may affect their attitudes or even judgement which may cause them to be criticized by you. You may never know what causes someone to act the way they do!

It is easy to make snide remarks in a joking manner, but sometimes those remarks hurt to the core. I had friend who made snide remarks to almost every person he knew. Usually, I brushed them off or gave him a zinger in return. One day he said something that hurt me to the core, and I told him so. He actually apologized and never did it to me again.

Sometimes people are not aware of what their words can do. They might cause the hearer to truly insulted and make a note in their book of life to avoid the offender at all costs. Both may have made bad judgements.

When Jesus was saying, “Judge not, lest ye be judged”, he is saying much more than that. Read on in Matthew Chapter 7 and you will see that he expands on what you heard. Depending on the Biblical translation, it can have multiple interpretations. It basically says, If you are going to pass judgement on others, the same criteria you used will be that used to judge **your** actions. That is a scary thought!

Matthew goes on to tell us more of what Jesus said. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye when you do not perceive the moat in your own eye? Let’s be fair in our criticism of others. Try to condemn the sin and not the sinner.

I am going to borrow a bit from a blogger named Stephen Altrogge¹:

When God evaluates a person, He looks at the whole person and takes into account *everything* about that person:

- biology
- sinful tendencies
- weaknesses
- family history
- current struggles
- and a thousand other factors in their life

We can make everyone's life better if we practice the love and understanding that we have learned through Jesus. Go the extra mile to understand the other person. Remember, there is no one who is perfect in this world except Christ Jesus. Himself!

¹ <https://theblazingcenter.com/author/stephenaltroggegmail-com>