



“PREPARATION”

- Luke 6:37-49

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Luke 6:37-49 *"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive,*

and you will be forgiven. 38 "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." 39 And He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? 40 "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. 41 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? 42 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye. 43 "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 "For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. 46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? 47 "Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. 49 "But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

Jesus has been teaching through what is known as the “Sermon on the Mount.” He has touched upon several subjects thus far, but now is going to move from one seemingly random subject to another in rapid succession. Such may seem too fast and disjointed, but in the Jewish world, this type of teaching/preaching would be the norm. This Jewish style of preaching is called “Charaz” or “stringing beads.” The Rabbis of that time had the idea that no preacher should linger any more than a few moments on any single topic! So if we had visited a temple in that day, the format may have seemed rather rapid for us Midwestern Americans! We like to unpack an idea and expand on it, and frankly sometimes talk it death! This pastor would probably not be invited back to preach again after my pulpit-fill the first time!

Jesus begins in this section by quoting what is one of the favorite weapons for entrenched rebels: *“judge not and you shall not be judged.”* A statement that is so often used as a “one-size-fits-all” tool to silence all criticism! There are a lot of folks out there that have this one strapped to the hip where they can draw quick when confronted by perceived religious hostility! But just like the last scriptural topic of love, one must allow the bible to be its own commentary and always approach the subject at hand with the full context of scripture.

Without sufficient understanding of this subject we are apt to interpret this edict as a veiled way of saying to everyone “keep your mouth shut.” Our culture today propagates this idea with principles such as: *if you don't agree with someone's lifestyle you are prejudice and you are a bigot. If you have the audacity to tell someone they are wrong, then you are arrogant and elitist. No opinions are tolerated and if you have one then you are required to keep it to yourself.* Well Jesus didn't...Paul didn't...the apostles sure got into the game, and prophets of old offended more than a few folks! So what's the answer?

Firstly, the term here in the original language *as well as the context in which it was delivered...* good places to look when things seem confusing or contradictory, speaks of a “judgment unto condemnation.” This speaks to the “you're going to burn in hell” not the “that shirt doesn't go with those pants.” They're not the same thing. One is about condemning you...rendering a verdict of permanent and eternal ramifications, and the other is speaking into your life with the hope of change...for your sake and everyone around you.

In Matthews account of this sermon, he mentions that Jesus followed up this statement with saying “*don't give to dogs what is sacred....do not throw pearls to pigs.*” Well, firstly, *ouch.* And secondly, how will I follow *that* verse if I cannot discern and judge just who is, well frankly, *the dog and pig?* Jesus tells us further in our passage today here in Luke that it is “by their fruit” that we will know what and whom they are. So again, such requires a discerning spirit and a judgment call. But in our world of moral ambiguity and situational truth, there apparently is no longer a standard or an objective truth for which to measure what is right and what is wrong. This is of course the result of removing Christ from our world.

Today, everyone's path and everyone's actions are (supposedly) equally valid and no one holds the absolute righteous road nor the corner on the market, and that includes God who made everything. That means essentially that there is no singular absolute truth! Yet scripture is clearly telling us that there *is* truth...inseparable from the character of God, and if someone contradicts that truth, such is a lie and therefore by implication, they are a liar! But to call something a lie and someone a liar is understood as “passing judgment” for which you are to be subsequently cast out of society and relegated to the “outer darkness” of extremists and zealots! Yet ironically the Bible has a *whole book* called **Judges!** In John 7:24, Jesus literally TELLS us to judge! But therein He also tells us that to do so superficially is wrong. Judging by appearances or what something *appears to be* is wrong without knowing the facts. And the engine that generally fires up that call is so often our *feelings* and our incomplete perceptions.

What we are not to do is to “judge to condemnation.” Meaning that we are indeed to be the “jury” to ascertain truth and fact, but never to be the judge to spiritually condemn an individual because of such. We are to judge between things...to “judge *between* right and wrong,” but we are not to be the hangmen. Please do not misunderstand that such does not prohibit action based on the judgment, but it does prevent spiritual “capital punishment.” That level of judgment is for God alone.

Jesus calls upon us herein to have wisdom and discernment. He tells us that “good trees” give “good fruit” and “bad trees” give “bad fruit.” By implication therefore, I must be able to look at the fruit of an individual's life...or their decisions...or their practice, ...and recognize, based on Christ as the standard, that their fruit is bad and thus the tree has a problem. It is impossible for me to be a successful and righteous pastor if I fail to have and exercise these spiritual giftings!

Certainly all of this is a big issue in today's culture and a deterrent to scriptural enquiry. Polls tell us that 9 out of 10 young people say Christians are "judgmental." But please note that "**bad** fruit" does not necessarily denote "evil" but the meaning is rather "rotten and poor quality." So it's not like we are or should be accusing someone of having evil intentions and unrighteous designs. It is saying that *whatever the 'mo was behind it, your fruit is no good.*

But my sense is that those "9 out of 10" have "bought the party line" and have been "spoon fed" the propaganda of the hyper-tolerant "anything goes" culture of our day. It's not that they have carefully considered and thought out such a position and came to their stance on their own through reason and fact! They either don't know what such means scripturally or they don't want anyone calling them out on anything concerning their life and lifestyle whatsoever! Yet the reality is that to involve yourself in REAL and BIBLICAL Christianity means you will have to **make** some judgments, and you will have to **take** some judgments. You will be judged on your actions and lifestyle by those around you and ultimately you will be eternally judged by the one who is the supreme judge as to your real and eternal standing.

I am the first to acknowledge that to even to *attempt to practice* this scriptural premise is going to get one into plenty of trouble! Our culture seems to be unable to endure anyone not being unquestionably supportive of everything that is happening and everything that is done! Our statement of "well, I can't support that" has been known to effectively blow people's minds and have literally chased innumerable people out of the church with that attitude of "how dare you pass judgment on me!" "*You can't cross me in that way.*" But I *can* ...that's my job and what you agree to when you become a Covenant Member here, and frankly I *must* if I am to be an obedient pastor before God! But please note, you get to do the same to me!

But to judge in the form of *condemnation*, that is the unrighteous action. I cannot pass that final judgment on anyone...I cannot place someone into the category as irretrievable. That is the judgment that Jesus speaks of here and for which we are banned from engaging in. Jesus elaborated as to "why" in this matter and as to the consequences. He says, in an echo of his comments about love, that how we deal with others in this matter is how we shall be dealt with. Things seem to "go around" in this life, don't they?

Why the overt warnings? Because we generally think we see so well, and everyone else is so blind. We think we are so righteous and everyone else is so evil. Our pride tends to sweep us away and while trying to pry the speck out of our brother's eye we fail to see the log in our own! While we tend to focus on correction, Jesus wants us to focus on mercy. While we want to be the teacher and guide others, Jesus wants us first to deal with ourselves, our own sins and shortcomings, and our own maturation. How can we honestly lead if we ourselves do not really know where we are going or how we are going to get there? How can we direct the traffic in a straight line when we are living in such an erratic fashion as to cause others around us to intervene and point out that you are all over the road?

Once again, good trees grow good fruit and bad trees grow bad fruit. It is astonishing to see seasoned believers in situations where there is anything *but* peace, where confusion is evident, erratic decision making is prevalent, where choices are being based on want and emotion, and then those same individuals will hear no counsel, and will reject all judgments (even if it is the whole of their church family) and then finally pull out the "get out of jail free" card saying "*you can't judge me...you aren't to judge me.*" Certainly that is a sad response from a non-believer that one is trying to reach or a young immature believer who has got caught in the storm. But sadly

it is all too often the believer of 10, 20, or 30 years that in their pride will reject it all...even if it was the very counsel that he or she gave a thousand times to others!

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Jesus is speaking the obvious because obviously we need to hear again and we need to hear from Him. According to Christ, we cannot claim we have a righteous heart if what is coming out of us is unrighteousness, pride, anger, bitterness, and hurting. Even Jesus at this point is practicing what He is preaching by *not* judicially condemning anyone or judging them eternally. That day will certainly come, but in way of example He seems to be at this point simply painting a picture...a framework from which we can draw conclusions and evidence for which to make righteous judgments without executing the one being judged. Hopefully we all can learn to judge ourselves as Paul entreated us to do in 1 Corinthians 11: 31 *“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”* The fact remains that we will never be so ‘right on’ in every situation! This is why there is church family and you need to belong to one that you trust to speak into your life and that you are willing to hear...not just in the good times when they are locked arms with you in unity, but the times that are rough and confusion abounds. Are you prepared to...*will you*, listen and receive in those times also? It’s a decision that must be burned into a mental and spiritual contract before you get to the crisis, or survival rates will be very low!

Verse 40 says "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." Who is your “teacher” or “teachers?” No...I’m not talking about the Spirit of God. Indeed He is teacher and counselor and comforter! But we need horizontal relationships and counsel. It is a fact! We all will have mentors and mentorees in our lives. For sure you need a pastor that can speak into your life and frankly be able to do so even in the midst of the spiritual hurricane! But there should be even more beyond him. Will you hear those voices in times of crisis?

46-49 *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."*

Oh the shocking truth of this passage! How often we will come before God and praise Him as “Lord” but fail to follow Him and ultimately look for Him to follow *us*? We fail to prepare for the inevitable day in which the “floods will rise and beat against our house.” We fail to draw up clear heart contracts with our church, our pastors, our brothers and sisters in fellowship for how we will deal with them when they get crazy and how you will respond to them when they think you are crazy! We fail to prayerfully consider the sound of God saying “no” and what we will do when He does. I have lost count of how many times that someone has come to believe in the heat of passion that the whole of the church that they trusted for *years* has gone nuts and that they are the sole dissenting voice...the only one who is seeing things correctly and righteously! Surely that is a sign of clinical madness, but due to the lack of preparation for that day, *...he who heard and did nothing ...was like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, ... and the stream beat against it...and it fell.*

And the ruin of that house was great.

Christian, *what’s your plan? Do you have that foundation?*