

A Jesus Person... Sees Truly

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Date: 26 July 2020

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[0 : 00] Well, let's ask our Heavenly Father again for his help. Well, Father, we just ask again that there will be no more issues in terms of the technical side, but we pray that your word will be able to go out smoothly this morning.

And we pray especially that the power of your Holy Spirit will be at work, will be impacting us. Give us ears to hear. And may you help us and shape us again to be more and more like Jesus and embrace Jesus' culture.

All this we pray in the name of your Son. Amen. Now this week, I was listening to someone describe her experience of growing up colorblind. It wasn't really a big deal, she said, until she entered high school.

And then things like choosing the right clothes became more important. When she was 15 or 16, she moved schools. And of course, she wants what every 16-year-old wants to fit in.

But it didn't help when early on, one of the boys told her, Oh, your eyes are bleeding. She thought he was joking. But when she got home and saw her dressing table, she realized what had happened.

[1 : 09] Her red lip liner and her brown eyeliner were both Clinique brand and she had mixed them up. She had put red lip liner around her eyes. Now, not being able to see rightly and accurately had messed her up.

She was so horrified that to this day, she made sure that her red lip liner and her eyeliner are both different brands so as not to confuse them. But one December, just a few weeks before Christmas, her boyfriend gave her a present.

It was something called Enchroma glasses, which I had never heard of until this week. But apparently, it filters out specific colour wavelengths and can help some people who have red-green colour blindness.

And there is a video of her trying on the glasses for the first time, looking at pictures of flowers and a photo of her son, and then getting emotional.

Now, she always could see. She wasn't blind-blind. But for the first time, she could really see.

Imagine if you pass the same store, day after day, with its faded sign.

[2 : 19] And then one day, they finally replace it. It's the same sign, same logo, same colours, but it looks brand new. Well, that's how the whole world now look to her.

She had less worry now about whether she'll mix up her shoes or misinterpret the Excel line graphs for her work. She can see rightly. Now, this might sound a little funny.

But at its heart, that's what today's passage is all about. Actually, it's what the whole Sermon of the Mount has been all about. Over the past two months, Jesus has been seeking to cultivate us into something beautiful.

He's been wanting to get Jesus' culture into our hearts. A culture that looks like Him, and talks like Him, and acts like Him. So that we can experience the fullness of life He wants us to have in His kingdom.

And one of the big ways He's been doing that is by adjusting our vision. He's been getting us to see rightly. Remember the Beatitudes way back in the beginning?

[3 : 29] That's Jesus adjusting our vision so that we'll see all those things. Being poor in spirit, mournful, hungry and thirsting for righteousness, as good and beautiful virtues to have and to hold.

On the flip side, He's helped us to see things like anger and lust for what they really are. Or think of last week, where Jesus asked us to look at creation and see how our Father meets our needs.

He's been getting us to see rightly. And today, for one more time, Jesus will adjust our vision again. He wants us to see ourselves rightly.

Those around us rightly. And God Himself rightly. So that we won't mess ourselves up like the colourblind girl. In verses 1-5, He wants us to see ourselves not as God the judge, but as the brother or sister who helps.

And in verses 6-12, He wants us to see God not as disposable, but as valuable, for He is the generous Father.

[4 : 46] If you like, those form the two lens of the Enchroma glasses we're going to put on this morning. And we'll spend slightly more time on the first. And so make sure the Bible is open in front of you to Matthew 7-1-12, and we'll put on these glasses.

So, the first lens. Don't see ourselves as God the judge. If we took a poll amongst Christians about which Bible verse is now the most well-known, what would be the candidates?

The classic John 3-16 would probably still be there. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

A newer contender would probably be Jeremiah 29-11. For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, the plans to prosper you and not to harm you.

But Matthew 7-1 would have to be a candidate as well. Do not judge. In fact, amongst unbelievers, it could very well be the most well-known Bible verse ahead of even John and Jeremiah.

[5 : 55] After all, should someone make a decision or a life choice which they perceive will arouse disapproval from Christians, this is what they say.

Don't judge me. It's don't judge me just because I did something different from you. It's my life, my choices, my lessons, none of your business.

Please don't tell me what is right and wrong, especially when your own house is not in order. Follow your master. Isn't that what he himself taught?

Stop judging. And so given how much baggage this verse is carrying, it seems wise to begin with what this verse is not saying to prevent its abuse.

After all, it could so easily be used as a muzzle. You know what a muzzle is? It's literally the covering you put over an animal's mouth to prevent it from biting.

[6 : 59] And to muzzle someone is to prevent them from speaking. And so 7 verse 1 could be used in such a way to prevent us from speaking truth to one another.

We come to a tacit agreement. You don't talk about my sins of the tongue if I don't talk about your sins of the eye.

We don't judge, quote unquote, each other. And so we never confront one another. We muzzle each other. But Jesus never intended for verse 1 to be used as a muzzle.

We can see this even from the passage itself. Just look down to verse 6. Do not give dogs what is sacred. Do not throw your pearls to pigs.

If you do, they may tremble them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces. Now this is not an easy verse to understand and we'll come to it later on. But for now, we can see that in some cases, the people who are told not to judge in verse 1 now have to render some sort of judgment in verse 6.

[8 : 12] They have to decide who falls into the rather negative categories of dogs and pigs. And then right after this section, in 7 verse 15 to 20, Jesus tells us specifically to judge who might be a true teacher and who might be a false teacher.

You have to judge their fruit. In the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus renders a negative judgment on things like unrighteous anger.

Look at the rest of Matthew. And in Matthew chapter 18, the church is empowered and given the authority to decide who is in and who is out.

Church discipline requires judgment. Go outside of Matthew to somewhere like John 7 verse 24. And Jesus says, stop judging by mere appearances, but instead, judge correctly.

So clearly Jesus isn't saying that all forms of judgment is wrong. He certainly isn't saying that you can never say someone is wrong or that something a person is doing is wrong.

[9 : 26] We know that even from our everyday experience. Just imagine watching a football game and the defender says, hey, referee, you know, that guy was like two feet offside.

And the referee says, my friend, haven't we been offside in our lives? Am I going to render a judgment simply because the guy was in the wrong place at the wrong time?

Or if you're a parent, you know very well that you must tell your little child when they are wrong or you will set them off in the wrong direction. And so Jesus isn't saying that we can never assess someone or something and come to a negative conclusion.

But if so, what is he forbidding then? Well, I think the issue is our confusion over the English word judge. Basically, the word judge can mean two different things.

One is to discern, to consider, to evaluate. That's the sense I've just tried to describe. That's what we have to do every day.

[10:40] But the other basic meaning is to condemn. I suppose it's what we mean when we use the associated word judgmental. judgmental. It's basically to have a critical spirit, one that puts myself above others, one that says, I'm better than you, one that says, I'm always right, and my assessment of you is always right.

And that's what Jesus is getting at and what he's against in verse 1. at its heart. It's putting ourselves in the place of God.

God, you see, has a right to judge. He is the judge, capital J, and so he can render a legal verdict on us and declare us guilty or not guilty.

God can give us the fairest performance reveal in the entire universe because nothing in our hearts is hidden from him. And so he can sentence us with absolute fairness according to our sin.

But we can't. And the very moment we try to do that, to pronounce someone guilty with our lips or in our heads and condemn them according to our imperfect subjective assessment, we have taken the place of God.

[12:12] Just imagine you're a convicted criminal. But the judge himself has paid the fine and granted the pardon. More than that, he's signed some papers to adopt you and provide food and shelter for you.

Well, that's the gospel. But now you put on his robes, pretend to be the judge, sit in his courtroom, look at each case file for like 10 seconds even though each case file is like 100 pages long, and in each one, whatever the case is, you've already made up your mind to pronounce each person guilty and punish them severely.

That's judgmentalism. And what is going to happen when the actual judge finds out? Well, Jesus warns us, verse 1, do not judge or you will be judged by God.

That's made clear in slightly expanded form in verse 2. For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

There's a reciprocal principle. The measure you use is the measure you'll be measured by. judge in the way that you did just now?

[13:36] Well, that's how you will be judged. It's similar to what we saw a few weeks ago in the Lord's Prayer, where those who do not forgive might find themselves in danger of not receiving forgiveness from God.

In short, you're putting yourself at risk. And so Jesus is calling us now, straight away, to self-examination.

It's very easy for us, me included, to look at this little section today and immediately think about who it could apply to. Oh, I hope my husband or wife is listening to this.

Oh, I hope that person is listening. They're so judgmental. But let me encourage every single one of us to stop thinking about someone else. Let Jesus speak to you and only you.

Let him deal with our hearts. Ask yourselves, do I have a tendency to judge in this way? And then ask the Holy Spirit to help you do some self-diagnosis.

[14:44] And here are three more H that can help you in examining yourselves. Firstly, do we have a tendency to judge hastily?

Perhaps we're quick to form opinions of others based on just one action or just one interaction? Oh, the person I only just met didn't greet me at church?

Oh, he must be a proud person. She must be an angry person. Oh, here's a little thought experiment. Let me just describe two people to you. Tell me, who is the more admirable person based on their habits?

Person A is a college drop out who regularly sleeps until noon. Person B is a war hero who gave up smoking and is faithful to his wife.

Now, I know that you're wary of answering now because you sense it's a bit of a trick question, person, but if you didn't have your guard up, we would pick person B, wouldn't we?

[15 : 47] But who is person A and person B? Person A is Franklin Roosevelt, the American president who helped end World War II. Roosevelt had polio and was left in a weakened state, meaning that he often had to sleep a lot.

In fact, his condition was kept secret from the public. And person B is Adolf Hitler who started World War II. Hitler was actually only married two days before he died.

And before that, he had a string of attachments to other women as well. You see, we can be so quick to make hasty but mistaken judgments without knowing the larger context.

Here's one more example this time from the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel, Eli, the high priest, saw Hannah praying in the temple, moving her lips wordlessly, and concluded straight away that she was drunk.

Only after confronting her did he realize that she was actually crying out to God in a way that put Eli, the religious professional, to shame.

[17 : 02] Again, that should give us pause. Are we too quick to judge a situation? Next, do we have a tendency to judge harshly?

That's what happens when we don't give the other person the benefit of the doubt. We naturally look for the worst, not the best in others. If someone doesn't reply a text message on time, we immediately think he's avoiding us or being irresponsible.

We don't think that he's dealing with a family emergency or simply feeling overwhelmed. If our proposal is not accepted by our boss or a church elder, we immediately assume that the other person is needlessly rigid and narrow-minded, not because they see certain things in the bigger picture that perhaps we are not privy to.

A friend of mine, a pastor, ran a seminar recently. And to be honest, it probably wasn't his best day. He wasn't always clear.

And during Q&A, he answered a question in a way that wasn't so helpful. But I know this friend. He's got four young children. He's got a whole congregation to look after without much help.

[18 : 22] He has extra responsibilities outside of his church ministry. Like all of us, he also has to work through the entire pandemic situation. And I know he works hard.

Now, there's no doubt he could improve. But I heard one feedback of his seminar that was so critical that the person giving feedback basically wrote off his entire ministry and said, no, he shouldn't be a pastor.

All based on one seminar, or more accurately probably one section of one seminar. The person wasn't otherwise familiar with his ministry. And I tremble to think that if I have a bad day, and I certainly have those, to have my entire ministry written off.

And that reminds me in turn that I need to be gentle and generous to others, not harsh and unkind, especially if they're having a bad day.

How do you evaluate others? With harshness or with big-heartedness? And then, do we have a tendency to judge habitually?

[19 : 38] If we are continually offering quick takes on just about everything around us, posting our opinions straight away on Facebook, well, maybe that could be a warning sign, where we're quick to define ourselves against others, regularly making a list of the qualities that we don't like in them, while selectively overlooking their better qualities.

Oh, he's too showy. She's too reserved. He's not committed enough. She's too committed. And that begins to poison our hearts and just makes the environment we're part of a little bit more toxic because we've made judgmentalism the default setting.

So, do I have a tendency to be hasty, harsh, and habitual in condemning others? If so, allow God to show you.

Admit where our hearts have gone astray. Then act by turning back to God and asking Him to turn our hearts.

For none of us, I'm sure, would want God to judge us in that way. If you're trusting Jesus, think of how God treats you. Does He dismiss your weakness?

[21 : 04] Does He show no sympathy? Is He rushing to condemn you? We're not asked to be blind to each other's faults, but we are asked to treat each other with sympathy, mercy, and generosity.

In other words, we treat each other as Jesus has treated us. Because we are to see ourselves as the brother or sister who helps.

That's the other side of the coin in verses 3 to 5. Now, just scan through these verses, and I want you to notice how often the language of brothers comes up.

Jesus has especially in mind here how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. And he draws this rather cartoony picture in verse 3.

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? We laugh. And I think Jesus means for us to laugh.

[22 : 13] It's a really silly picture, isn't it? But once we stop laughing, we're meant to realize that Jesus is making a deadly serious point. Just imagine I'm an eye surgeon, and someone comes in and says, Oh, hi, you're the doctor?

I'm here for my surgery. Oh, good, good, good, good, good. Okay, just sit over there by the bookshelf. Doctor, that's not the bookshelf, that's the fridge. Oh, sorry, you know, fridges and shelves, they all look the same anyway, don't they?

Well, anyway, take off your glasses. Doctor, I'm not wearing any. Oh, is it? Maybe you just took them off and then you forgot. Anyway, don't worry, I'm the best eye doctor in town.

I don't think I would blame you if you decide there and then to walk out the door that you just came in. But Jesus says that when we are playing the judge, we've basically become this eye surgeon.

We can't help anyone. Verse 4. How can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your own eye, when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

[23 : 26] Why can't we help anyone? Because we've practiced double standards. We're so fixed on the faults of others that we cannot see our own faults. We're looking for specks and we can't even see the plank.

Our blind spot is so huge that we don't even know it's there. Like a colorblind girl, we're so used to not seeing colors that we think it's normal. We're just too good at deceiving ourselves.

And so after drawing this illustration, Jesus offers a correction. Verse 5. You hypocrite. First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Now, notice, first of all, why we are meant to take the plank out of our own eye. It's so that we can help our brother with his speck.

Once again, that helps us see that Jesus is not talking about never confronting or correcting others at all. In fact, that's the goal of plank removal.

[24 : 37] We remove our plank so that we can help others with their speck. We stop condemning so that we can start helping our brothers and sisters in Christ be more Christ-like.

And so again, Jesus isn't saying that there's no such thing as right and wrong. He's saying stop judging precisely so that we can help each other get on the right path and stop going down the wrong one.

But how can we achieve this? By acknowledging our hypocrisy and turning from it. Nick helpfully told us a few weeks ago in his sermon that hypocrisy is about putting on a mask.

It's about pretending who you are not. And Jesus says, you are not the ultimate judge. You are not God. So stop pretending to be the person who has the right to condemn.

But who are we then? Well, remember the Beatitudes? Remember that's Jesus describing who we are meant to be? We're those who are poor in spirit, merciful, a peacemaker.

[25 : 55] People who know God's mercy and humility. People who are more willing to see our own faults rather than the faults of others.

People who will be honest in our self-evaluation. People who are free to admit before God our own sinful tendencies and not cover it up.

And who are therefore free to receive his undeserved grace. These are those who can help others. Now at this point, it's helpful to address a particular misconception. Sometimes we think that verses 3 to 5 means that we have to be perfect before we can address anyone else's sin.

Now if that's true, no one will ever address anything. In fact, verse 5 just becomes another burden. But it's better to think of it the way John Wesley did.

[27 : 00] The judging that Jesus condemns here is thinking about another person in a way that is contrary to love. That's all Jesus is getting at.

We don't need to have a perfect marriage, or a perfect thought life, or perfectly have our temper under control, before we can help others. And that is so important because that's usually what stops us from helping one another.

But we're not asked to be sinless. We're simply asked to know Jesus, know his love, and show that love to others. Show the love that sometimes disciplines and rebukes and corrects.

And if we get that, that has the potential to change a church. When a church truly embraces Jesus' culture, it won't be a place of condemnation.

It will be a place of grace, and humility, and love, and forgiveness. It will be a safe place for us to gently correct one another.

[28 : 13] Because we know that we have each other's best interest at heart. We're not looking to condemn. Wouldn't that be great if that's our church? That will be a place where spiritual transformation can truly take place.

And that brings us to our second lens. See, God not as disposable, but as valuable. people. We come now to verse 6.

And what you should probably know is that most commentators agree that this is the hardest verse to interpret in the entire sermon of the mount. What is Jesus talking about?

Well, the first thing to realize is that the dogs being referred to here aren't like your cute pet chihuahua, and neither is the pig pepper pig. These are wild, violent, and unclean animals.

They are the opposite of pearls, which are very valuable. Later on in Matthew 13, the kingdom of God itself is described as a pearl of great price.

[29 : 26] And so the basic picture here is not to treat something valuable as disposable. And the traditional evangelical interpretation is to say that verse 6 is basically Jesus saying to his disciples, don't waste your time with people who persistently don't want to hear about God and his kingdom.

Don't waste something of value on those who would simply reject and trample on it. Later on in Matthew 10, Jesus would indeed say something along these lines.

But it seems to me that interpretation doesn't quite fit the context so well here. It seems a little bit out of place since Jesus hasn't really been talking about evangelism.

And so I started thinking again, well, if the pearl is something of value and Matthew elsewhere has already connected it with the kingdom, perhaps it's worth asking, in the immediate context, what is of most value in the kingdom?

The answer seems to be your relationship with your heavenly father. That's what Jesus has been majoring all along ever since chapter 6.

[30 : 45] And so perhaps Jesus is saying, don't treat God as disposable by making yourself the judge. When you do, you are not just unseating the judge, you are disposing your father.

To use the language of last week, it's the opposite of storing up heavenly treasure. For if God isn't your father, you lose everything. Because the pigs and the dogs representing the world, well, they're not going to look after you, they're not going to care about your relationship with God.

In fact, it's the opposite. Well, that seems to fit the context slightly better, and so that's my tentative conclusion. don't dispose, but value your relationship with your heavenly father.

That's verse 6. For why is it so amazing that God is your father? Because he is the generous father. All throughout verses 7 to 11, he is characterized as the father who gives. Just look at verse 7.

Now, this verse, of course, isn't meant to function like a divine credit card.

[32 : 08] You know, just whip it out, ask for that promotion at work or some other favorable outcome, and it will automatically be credited to you. This verse, after all, is part of the Sermon on the Mount.

And what has Jesus already encouraged us to ask for? We ask for his kingdom to come and for his will to be done.

We ask for provision, pardon, and protection. For every day, every single hour, we really need him. You know, last week, I just preached on worry. But to be honest, this past week has been one feud with worry for me. Some of you might remember that I chaired a KVBC Next Gen conference, and since it's getting close to when our first digital conference is happening, I'm feeling quite worried whether we've got everything in place.

Or take what we just heard today. I know very well that too often, I don't give people the benefit of the doubt. I make ungenerous assumptions about them.

[33 : 15] I fail to show a godly example in my attitude to others. And to be honest, the entire Sermon of the Mount shows just how divided my heart still is, how Jesus isn't always number one in my life.

And so I need to ask and to plead with God, help me to trust you. Help me to cast my worries on you. Help me to stop being judgmental.

Please help me to love what you love. And help me to love you. And here's the amazing promise of God. Verse 8.

For everyone who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. And to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Jesus says, expect and answer.

Because God is your good Father. Verse 9. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone. Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake.

[34 : 19] If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?

God is good. And so he knows how to give and what to give. As one commentator puts it, God's character is prayer's anchor.

You know, I said earlier that verse 7 isn't an automated credit card. But you know, we can ask for a favorable outcome or even a promotion at work.

We really can. If it's a good thing, God isn't stingy. If it's good, he's happy to give it.

The question is whether we trust his assessment of what is truly good. It's whether we trust he sees things rightly all the time.

[35 : 21] It's whether we are humble enough to accept his judgment of what is best and trust him still to be our good father.

You see, sometimes we think we're asking for bread, but we're really asking for stones. And if a father puts a stone in his little boy's hand, he is giving his little boy a potential weapon, which he could use to hurt others.

Or sometimes we ask for a snake, thinking we're asking for fish. But if a father puts a snake in his little girl's hands, he is giving his little girl something that could hurt her badly.

But because God is good, he never does either. He sees better than us, and so he knows when the bread we're asking for is actually a stone.

He knows when the fish we're asking for is actually a snake, and so he says no. But when we do ask for real bread and real fish, he is more than delighted to say, yes, he wants to.

[36 : 32] Now, asking for a promotion at work could be bread, or it could be stone. We don't know. We can't see the future. We don't know all the circumstances.

But there are things that scripture tells us is definitely bread and fish. Do you want to make progress in your prayer life? Well, that's definitely bread.

And so ask him, Lord, I don't know how to pray. I often don't want to pray. Help me pray. Do you want to grow to be more like Jesus? That's definitely fish.

And so ask him, Lord, my heart is cold, set me on fire, and make me tired of compromising. The Sermon on the Mount as a whole helps us judge better what is bread and fish.

And when we know God is our generous father, well, once again, we can be a brother or sister in Christ who can help. When we know what we've been given, we can more freely give to others.

[37 : 41] That's what verse 12 is all about. So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you. For this sums up the law and the prophets.

It has been observed that verse 12 is not unique to Christianity. Many other religions and philosophies around the time of Jesus said something similar. And I guess even today it's the same. But what is unique about Jesus' way of putting it is how he frames it. You see, during that time, other people often put it negatively. You know, don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you.

I suppose that's how the beginning of today's passage in verse 1 works. But technically, that means you can do nothing. If you do nothing, you're not doing anything bad to others.

And so, no one will repay you in that way. But Jesus isn't satisfied with that. Instead, he puts it positively. Do to others what you would have them do to you.

[38 : 49] And what Jesus is really saying is this. Love your neighbor. Do good to them. As God has treated you generously, be generous to them.

In the way that you see them, in the way you judge them, in the way you help your brother be more Christ-like. And you are able to do that when your relationship with God is strong.

you are able to do that when you accept the Enchroma glasses Jesus has given you, and see God, yourself, and those around you rightly.

And when you see God, not as a monochrome, miserable, miser, but you see him as a colorful, joyful father, the way you relate to him and to others changes. because the one who is the heartbeat of the law and prophets has now shown you the heart of God. His heart beats for you.

[40 : 00] And his heart is the heart we want. Isn't that true? His heart is the heart we want. Let's ask him for that now.

Let's ask him for that now. Heavenly Father, we come before you now and we ask that you continue to do heart surgery on us.

Please expose us in the areas where we judge in the way that Jesus warned us against. Help us to see if we have been too hasty, too harsh, too habitual in the way we condemn others and help us to turn to you and repent.

Help us instead to be people who desire the good of others, who has the best interest of others at heart, that we are willing even to remove the speck from them by removing the plank in our own eye.

And Father, we thank you that you are a generous Father. you are a Father who delights to give good gifts to us. We know that because you've given us Jesus. But we know that you delight to give us other gifts as well.

[41 : 20] And so Father, help us to ask. Help us to ask in line with your will. Help us to ask the things that the Sermon of the Mount has trained us to ask for, so that we would be more and more like Jesus and that in that way we can be salt and light to the world.

So help us to nurture our relationship with you, not to see it as disposable, not to throw it away. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.