

## Loving and Judging: Part 1

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Last fall, we took a break from studying the Gospel of Luke; we're picking that up again today. But we are parachuting right into the middle of Jesus' fairly lengthy teaching on love for others. Let me paraphrase something Jesus said: The greatest commandment ever given to us is "Love God with everything." And the second is just like it; it goes like this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." I'm wondering if you feel the gravity of your need for God's help to do that. To love God and to love others. The Bible says it's impossible without the help of God; yet, love for God and love for others is required. Does that seem fair to you? That God would require something of you that you can't accomplish? Well, that's not the whole story. The incredible promise of God is with his help you can obey these commands. We like to say around here: Loving people is our greatest expression of our love for God. So, if you are hungry for God's help let's turn to Luke 6:37-42.

Before we read, let's remind ourselves of what Jesus has been talking about. Starting in vs. 27, Jesus tells his disciples and followers that their lives should be characterized by love. But not some run-of-the-mill kind of love; not the kind of love that everybody on earth has. No, have a radical, sacrificial love like God has. Everybody loves those who love them. There's nothing special about loving happy people, giving people, clean people, nice-smelling people. You don't need God's help to love those people who are lovely. You get that, right? The more you sacrifice, the more you lose, the more you give without getting anything in return the more difficult loving people will be. Jesus says, "Love your enemies; love those who hurt you, who strike you, who steal from you." We can't do that without God's help.

Look at vs. 35-36 (READ). That's the call. Love like God. What's God like? God is kind to ungrateful people; he's kind to evil people... you know, people like you and me. It's otherworldly, isn't it? But that's the call. And it's possible (and required) with the help of God.

Well, Jesus isn't done. What we are about to read starting in vs. 37 continues this train of thought; loving people well. But he takes a new angle. Let's read what he says and then we'll try and put the pieces together (READ vs. 37-42).

As you can see from the opening verse and the theme throughout, Jesus' focus is on judging; or maybe better stated, on *not judging*. It's important to see how this fits the previous verses. It's not just that he's teaching us not to judge, but he's showing us that living judgmentally with condemnation towards others misses the mark of a life of love. It's the opposite of what Jesus has just called you to. Jesus just said, "Be merciful like God is merciful. Be kind to the evil, to the ungrateful. Give. Lend. Do good. Love your enemies." You can't do that if you are filled with judgmentalism, hypocrisy and unforgiveness? So, Jesus isn't beginning a new topic; it's more like he's continuing his topic on love but adding more dimensions to the

life he's calling you to. That means as we hear Jesus' teaching on not judging he's inviting you to embrace the life of love to a greater degree.

This passage is going to require two Sundays. It's a somewhat complicated subject as we will see moving forward. So, I have an outline; there are four sections to my outline. We'll address the first one this morning and the other three next Sunday. Here is the outline.

- What goes around comes around (vs. 37-38)
- The power of persuasion (vs. 39-40)
- Finding 20/20 vision (vs. 41-42)
- How to help your friend (vs. 42)

**What goes around come around.** The forgiveness you give is the kind you'll get. The harshness of your judgements will be measured back to you. What goes around comes around. That's how Jesus opens this section. Notice the contrast to what he just said in vs. 36; "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." Mercy is all about treating someone better than they deserve. When we steal we don't *deserve* a second chance. When we betray others we don't *deserve* their forgiveness. When we lie we don't *deserve* to keep our friends. You may remember my favorite motto: We don't deserve it! But that's the beauty of God's mercy. He treats us better than we deserve. Every single one of us needs mercy; every single one of us has done the unforgivable (don't point fingers... point the thumb). But God gives mercy. And because God gives mercy, you need to give mercy, too.

But there is a time when God will be harsh and unforgiving. Do you know when that time is? When we are; when we are harsh and unforgiving. There's this remarkable reality in the scriptures where God links the way he relates to us to the way we relate to others. If we are going to be harsh to others, God is going to be harsh to us. If we are going to condemn people for minor sins, God will condemn us for minor sins. If we are going to refuse to forgive then God won't forgive us either.

We see this theme in the Lord's Prayer. In Matthew 6:12 Jesus says, "and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Think about what he's saying; as we have forgiven others, in the manner, to the degree we have offered forgiveness, God, forgive us. Do you want that? Do you want God to forgive you as you have forgiven others? Have you offered forgiveness to others the way you want God to forgive you? Have you been as generous, lavish and opulent with grace to others the way you hope God will be towards you? We're oftentimes not even close to being that generous.

Then a few verses later Jesus says in vs. 14-15, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." That's pretty clear, isn't it? There's no need to wonder: will Jesus forgive me even if I don't forgive others? No! Of course not! Can Jesus say anything more plainly? If that gives you anxiety that means you understand the

passage well. This kind of godly anxiety is meant to lead you to repentance and trust in Christ. We'll talk about this eventually, but I'm going to let it sit there for a while.

Let's examine our passage in Luke: there are 4 commands in our two opening verses in Luke; judge not, condemn not, forgive and give. And every one of these commands comes with an incentive to obey, a reason why you should do them. Don't judge and you won't be judged. Don't condemn, and you won't be condemned. Forgive, and then you'll be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. You want those things, right? So do them. Don't judge or condemn others and you won't be judged or condemned; forgive and be gracious to others and God will forgive and be gracious to you. In fact, the degree to which you do them is the degree to which you'll receive them.

Do you see that little analogy in vs. 38? "Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put in your lap." What in the world does that mean? I read that and thought, "Did Jesus get that from Mary Poppins?" It's an agriculture example. When merchants would measure their grain they would have a process. They would fill their basket a little, then they'd press it down. They'd shake it and then add more with more shaking and pressing. They did this so they could fill a basket with as much grain as possible. The point is found in the following sentence: For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

So, if you're generous and forgiving to others, if you are slow to be angry and quick to overlook an offense, that's how God will treat you. God will be generous and forgiving to you. He'll be slow to anger and quick to overlook your sins just like you've been patient and kind. But if you're harsh. If you're impatient. If you don't care about the challenges and misfortunes that others are going through, well, guess what? What goes around comes around. That's how God is going to treat you.

The FBC staff are reading this book together; it's called *A Loving Life* by Paul Miller. He talks about this. Listen to what he says (READ pg. 52). Isn't that true? We do get stuck on the depravity of people; we see other people's sins, failures and shortcomings so very easily, don't we? We even see innocent mistakes and personal weaknesses and challenges and we think the worst.

Those of you who are newer to FBC in the last few years didn't have the chance to get to know Jerry Mantik (PIC). Jerry Mantik died in 2013. He lived the last 12 years of his life in a wheelchair paralyzed from the neck down due to a motorcycle accident in 2001. Jerry had a big smile, a big voice and a big love for family, church and his God. I have a lot of good memories about my friend. Something that I remember that puts a smile on my face is that I had special knack of putting Jerry to sleep during my sermons; sort of like I'm able to do that for some of you (it's a gift; I put adults to sleep and I make babies cry).

One of the times I visited Jerry in his home he brought this up; he brought up how he would fall asleep during my sermons. And he told me he felt bad about it. And God used what

he told me to change the way I view people. He said, "I'm sorry I sleep during your sermons. All night long I have intense pain shooting down my legs. Pastor, I want to cry it hurts so bad. I can't fall asleep and I stay up all night asking God to help me. So, when I get to church and the pain isn't there, I'm just so tired and I fall asleep."

Think of the ways I could have measured Jerry sleeping through sermons. "He doesn't love Jesus very much; he doesn't take his faith very seriously. He doesn't love the word. Why doesn't he want to grow in his faith?" Or, "Doesn't Jerry care how hard I worked for this sermon and he doesn't even want to listen to it?" Do you see how easy it is to measure negative, sinful motives and intents in a person? Do you see how the generosity or harshness of our measurements influences the way we regard and relate to people? I know it was harder for Jerry to make it to church than any of us on a Sunday morning. But he came anyway. He put in the work to be with his church family. His lovely wife, Carol, sacrificed more than most of us sacrifice to worship with her husband. And praise God, rather than pain shooting down his legs during a church service he had relief and with that relief he was able to get some rest for his body while I was able to preach God's word over him and hopefully give him rest for his soul. There was nothing evil, immature or sinful in any of that. But, oh how easy it is to measure differently.

How about you? Think of the ways you are tempted to measure people. I'm guessing - FBC kids, FBC teenagers - there are kids at school, kids at Awana or youth group that you might think are... different. Maybe they are loud and disobedient; maybe their personal hygiene is poor; maybe they keep on getting in trouble; maybe you think they always say the wrong thing. How are you tempted to measure them or see them? What if I told you every day those same kids wake up with no food in their house for them to eat. What if I told you they lived in foster homes because their moms and dads couldn't take care of them. Or, what if I told you their brother committed suicide last year and many nights they cry themselves to sleep and think maybe they should do that, too? Would you measure them differently? Why are our judgements oftentimes so harsh?

FBC, what don't you know about your neighbor, about your coworker, about those people you always see in the grocery store that if you did know it might just change what you think of them? Do you see what I mean? Part of what Jesus is saying is, "If you knew more you would measure differently." And not just about others, but about yourself. If you knew more about yourself you would measure others differently (we'll talk about that next week).

Next week's material is going to be critical; we'll learn why we do what we do and how we can experience God's grace. But for today the word is *beware*: for as high of a bar you set for others, that's how high the bar will be set for you.

Before we close I want to address two points. Here's the first one. This might sound like you and I get saved by our works. Let's make sure we forgive because when we do (when we perform this work) God will forgive us. This is an important question. How do we receive

forgiveness? Does Jesus save us by his sacrificial work on our behalf or do we save ourselves by our own sweat and blood? The answer, I pray for most of you, is clear. Jesus died for our sins; we are forgiven only because of what he did for us, not what we can do for ourselves. Rest, my brothers and sisters, in the awesome work of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins; the work you could never do for yourself. But what do these other verses mean then? Friends, remember: forgiving others is impossible. You can't do it on your own. You can only do it because of God. More than anything, this call from Jesus is a call to run to him for help. It's an invitation to humble yourselves and say, "God, without you I'm lost and can not be kind or generous to others. Be merciful to me, a sinner." Two things happen to you when you confess and turn to Jesus: 1) You are forgiven of your sins and 2) you're given the supernatural ability to be merciful to others the way God is merciful to you. So, here's the big take away. Your lack of forgiveness towards others, your harsh condemnation towards others is a sign that you don't know Jesus like you need to know him. It's an invitation to run to him more and more so that we can receive his forgiveness and his help to be all that he's calling us to be. He'll do this work in us.

Here's the second point: If you want to live this life (and I know so many of you do), prepare to die. Die to yourself. Die to your wants, your preferences, your will. It's the only way. The reason why you and I don't love very well is because we're not willing to die. The earthly, selfish part of me doesn't want to do; it wants you to die for me (not the other way around). But it's the only way: Paul Miller said it so well in that same book, "That's why, subconsciously, we are allergic to love. We rightly sense that death is at the center of love." Hear the words of God (Mk 8:35), "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." Friends, believe God's promises. Die to yourself and live for God.

Key verse: Luke 6:37-38a ~ Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you.

#### Questions for the week

- When is loving others hard for you? Where at?
- Is it good news that God will give to you what you give to others?
- Who (i.e. a kid at school? A co-worker? A neighbor) are you tempted to measure harshly? Confess and repent of any sin that you have.