

Sermon 22.8.21 - Matthew 7:1-6 All Age Holy Communion.

Preacher: Jenny Warrington

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. This feels like pretty clear teaching from Jesus, doesn't it? Just to clarify, Jesus is not saying we can't have lawyers and a legal system – but he's warning against us personally judging others.

Now, we all know people who are judgemental. If I give you just 10 seconds can you think of one or two people you know who you would describe as judgmental....Hmm But who here would admit to being judgemental themselves? Hmm

There's a mismatch and Jesus talks into this...

This passage is part of Jesus's sermon on the mount – where he outlines how we can live good lives, moral lives, lives pleasing to God. We heard from Brian 2 weeks ago about the danger of holding too tightly to stuff, and talks about the importance of laying up treasure in heaven. Then Andrea last week brought us some of Jesus's teaching on worry, acknowledging there is a lot to worry about...but how this robs us of living a life of joy. Jesus always encouraging us to seek God's Kingdom first, for it is the better way.

And now, he moves into a new section of material which is equally challenging– don't judge others.

You see, you may think you don't judge others, but in reality, we all do, all the time...and Jesus knows this and says beware. And he goes on to give one of those most graphic illustrations. So rather than invent a new one – I'm going to use his. After all, if it's good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for us.

I need two volunteers, two people to help me this morning...

Please come and stand in a line along the front here.

N1 please could you shut your right eye. Here is a piece of wood

Can you hold the wood against that closed eye? (Please don't try this at home!!)

Now I am going to attach something to the wood. (Hang off one end of each piece of wood the sign "ENVY") Great.....stay like that until I tell you.

Now just to reassure you this is just a visual illustration..I am absolutely not passing judgement on N1..!

What if I told you this morning that I am struggling with ENVY? I saw a friend's wonderful garden on Facebook last week and I thought to myself, "I wish I had a garden like this rather than my little postage-stamp-sized garden we currently have. I really want a garden like hers. I haven't been able to get that thought out of my head all week. It is like having a speck of sawdust in my eye..... It is really bothering me.

Now, I need one of these two people here, to help me with my envy problem; to help me remove this speck of sawdust from my eye.

But who should I choose?

This person here – (N1) Well this person here has got a massive envy problem. It's a big stick of a problem as you can see....

He is envious of anyone who has something that he doesn't have.... He is envious of his neighbour's video games, his sister's friends his mother's computer, his teacher's brains and many other things.

So, he really understands envy ...But I'm not sure that he could help me.

You see, he really told me off on Thursday when I shared with him that I was feeling envious about my friend's garden. He told me that – church leaders shouldn't be envious, that they should be better than that, and how disappointed he was in me. I felt really judged.

This person here, however (Point at N2) used to have a massive envy problem once. They really knew all about envy. But, with the Lord's help, they have removed the plank from their eye. They have dealt with their envy and got rid of it.

Which person do you think can help me best with my envy problem? It's N2 isn't it?

Because they understand envy, they understand my problem. But they have dealt with their problem and so they are much more likely to be able to help me, They are much less likely to judge me when I ask for help. And I am so much more likely to be able to deal with my envy problem with their help...

So often we like to criticize and condemn others for their sins; the sin that we ourselves struggle with.

It's really interesting, that if we struggle with envy, then we are more likely to spot envy in others.

If we struggle with pride, then we can often more easily spot pride in others.

If we struggle with greed – wanting more and more stuff – then we are more likely to judge those who hoard stuff. The truth is...We all judge.

But Jesus said, *“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? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?*

You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

Thank you helpers.....do go and sit down. The illustration we've just seen – is clearly made up – I have no idea if either of you have an envy problem. It was just an illustration. But the message is clear...

We all sin...but it is much easier to see the sin in others than it is to see the sin in ourselves...

And Jesus calls us all to sort out our own failings. We, as Christians need to be better. You see, we are Jesus to others. Yes, we are Jesus's hands and feet but more than that we represent Jesus, we carry Jesus, we shine Jesus, we show Jesus to the world. Do you know, many people think of Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites and will quote this verse back at us...Don't judge! Don't judge me, man!

That word hypocrite literally means a play-actor – one who wears a mask as a disguise. Putting on a different view of who they really are. We can pretend to be better, but in reality, our planks are very often more visible than we'd like to think or realise.

There are subtleties to this command not to judge, because clearly Jesus judges others and calls us to judge sin, to call sin out. There are clearly passages in the bible that suggest there are times when we are called to correct a brother or sister who have sinned (just read... Matthew chapter 18, or Matthew 28 the great commission. Titus chapter 3 verse 10 and many others. Jesus doesn't say ignore the speck in your neighbours' eye – but he says you must be able to see clearly in order to take it out and you can't see clearly if you haven't dealt with your own sin. We may point out other's sins, but we may not judge them. That's God's job.

More than that, Jesus says when you judge someone else, remember that you also are going be judged... That phrase measure for measure. The amount of judgement you measure out, will come back in similar measure. So, the less judgemental you are, the less judgement will be heaped upon you. The more you judge people, the more you will be judged. What goes around comes around. The measure you use, is going to be measured back to you.

But if you do see another sinning, ask yourself, on what basis am I judging them – by my own standards or by God's? By my own prejudices and preferences or by God's holy word. We are here to help and encourage others in their faith, rather than condemn them. We are here to shine Jesus to the world.

So may I encourage us all to check ourselves more often for both planks and sawdust and ask God to help us remove them first. Amen.