

The Sermon on the Mount
Part 11: The Log in Your Eye
April 26th & 27th 2014

Welcome: (Easter)

At the beginning of February, we began walking through Jesus' most well known sermon, which you can find in Matthew chapters 5-7. For the next four weeks, we'll finish our series in chapter 7!

If you're just joining us...the heart of *The Sermon on the Mount* is Jesus saying to us, *"This is how I created you to live...but you'll never do it on your own. But, Jesus says...if we will bow our knees to Him as the King of our lives, He will go to work in us and shape us to be the people He created us to be!"*

In chapter 7, Jesus turns his attention to our relationships and how we are to live out the gospel together and with others...

You see...when Jesus becomes the King of your life, He will not only transform your **private life** – things such as your desires, ambitions, motives, your character and thought life – Jesus will also transform your **public life**...who you are becoming as a man or woman, as a friend, as a husband or wife...as a parent, and neighbor...and so on.

Now, any time that Jesus gets into the places of our lives that others can see, it's bound to get uncomfortable...

Wounds – Do you remember, as a child, when you fell and skinned your knee, how you went to your mother hoping that she would make it better! But in order to make it better, she had to get out soap and a washcloth, or peroxide if you were unlucky, and your mom scrubbed the wound, which every young child thinks is a very cruel to do. Now, before she got into the wound, do you remember what your mother would say? She'd say...*'This is going to hurt for a moment.'*

I think that Jesus would say the same thing to us, *'this is going to hurt before it heals.'* However, if we will allow His words to make their way into our heart, they'll have a healing effect!

Look with me at Matthew chapter 7, verse 1.

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged." Mt. 7:1

Judge – Now...the word that Jesus used for 'judge' very simply means *'to adopt a judgmental or critical attitude toward others.'*

Movie Critics – In our home, my kids are constantly telling me about the latest movies to be released in theatres...and they love to read and watch movie-reviews

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to determine what we can see. **Did you know that being a movie-critic is a legitimate career path?** How do you get that job? After a long or difficult week at work, who of us wouldn't want to watch movies and give our opinions? Now, there are probably only six movie critics in the world who actually draw a paycheck but that's beside the point. Their job is literally to dissect and critique a movie's quality and content for the viewing audience!

When Jesus warns us not to judge others, He's saying, *"Don't assume the role of people-critic!" "Don't make it your job to dissect the quality and content of people's lives."*

Now, the majority of us are going to agree with Jesus that there is nothing more irritating or off-putting than a judgmental person. And yet, we don't stop to consider that Jesus is talking to us! He's obviously talking to someone else, right. Many of us are like, "I know that person!"

Unchristian – Several years ago, a book came out that revealed what young people between the ages of 16 and 29 who are not Christians think about modern-day Christianity! The authors did a number of surveys and thousands of interviews to arrive at their conclusions and here's some of what they found!

*9 out of 10 young people said that the term **judgmental** describes present day Christianity.*

*53 percent of young Christians agreed that the label **judgmental** accurately fits present-day Christianity!*

Just to put this in practical terms. When you introduce yourself to a twenty-something neighbor or colleague, and you mention your faith, chances are that he or she will think of you as judgmental whether you like it or not...whether you are or not!

It's alarming, isn't it...that a majority of people think that Christians have superiority complexes and are always finding fault in others...and condemning them.

We might be tempted to say, *"Well...that's just someone's perception. It can't tell the whole story."* But if we're being honest, we know that there is something real here, isn't there?

My Story – I can attest to this from personal experience! I'm a recovering legalist...and for years, I was a master at dissecting and criticizing those around me. If you had known me then, you wouldn't have liked me very much at all! And yet...at

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the time, I had no idea how deep my judgmental and critical spirit ran and how harmful it was to me and to those around me!

Only years later can I see how dark and destructive my sin was.

You see...when we play the role of the critic or judge we place ourselves above the people around us. We arrogantly assume that we're better than they are...that we would never act like they act or make the choices they make or end up where they are, and so we look down our nose toward them. And in our smugness, we never consider that our hearts are far darker and more destructive than we can imagine.

We don't consider it...because we don't see it! And in verse 3 Jesus explains why we don't see it!

Look at what He says...

"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye?"
Matthew 7:3-4

Jesus is using comedic humor here! Imagine a person with a log hanging out of his eye...going up to someone else in the room saying, "you've got something right there...hold still and I'll help you get it." It's ridiculous, isn't it?

Jesus is showing us that underneath the sin of a critical and condemning spirit is a rugged pride, and pride always keeps us from seeing the log in our own eye...the truth about ourselves!

Now...Because the nature of pride is to leave most of us thinking that Jesus is talking about someone else, which by the way is a sure sign that He's talking directly to us, we need to ask questions that help us move toward honesty...

So...let me do that for a moment!

When you get together with friends, does your conversation regularly drift to someone who isn't in the room...and the choices they are making that you don't like or agree with? If so, are you gossiping by sharing information about them, or are you trying to determine how to help them?

At work, do you find yourself in complaint sessions about other colleagues or a boss who isn't in the room?

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Ladies, when you go out with your friends, do you complain about your husband or build him up? Guys...when you're with the other guys do you belittle your wife and put her down or do you esteem and build her up?

When the in-laws come over; nevermind, I'll leave that one alone...

If you have a social media account like Facebook, do you use it as a tool to passively or aggressively post your dislike for others?

Are there people or groups of people you can't stand to be around because of how you view their life or lifestyle?

If you answer yes to any of these or scenarios like them, then Jesus words will become very uncomfortable for us...

And part of the reason that His words make us so uncomfortable is because they reveal something about us that we detest in others! There isn't a single one of us who wants to consider that we might be judgmental. And culturally speaking, there is probably no more of a repulsive label that we could receive, is there?

But even more painful is this...for us to acknowledge that we may be judgmental would require us to face something about ourselves that we don't want to see!

12 Years a Slave – There is a striking example of this in the movie, *12 Years a Slave*, which is based on a book that follows the story of Solomon Northup, a free man from New York who is kidnapped and sold into the slave trade in Louisiana. It's a very difficult movie to watch, but once you do, you'll never see slavery the same again! One of the most appalling points in the film shows how one of Northups' owners, Edwin Epps, treated his slaves with such arrogance, hatred and brutality, while at the same time holding worship gatherings for them...

The pride in Epps' heart kept him from seeing that the very Scriptures he read from condemned him. He was able to hide under a facade of religion...and in doing so, Epps didn't have to face the wretchedness in his own heart!

In the same way, we can criticize others and even use Scripture to justify it, and never pay attention to the truth about how dark and wretched our hearts really are...

"(When we judge others) We have a rosy view of ourselves and a jaundiced view of others. Indeed, what we are often doing is seeing our own faults in

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others and judging them vicariously. That way, we experience the pleasure of self-righteousness without the pain of penitence.” Oswald Chambers

Chambers is saying that when we judge others, we often criticize in them what we don't like about ourselves because it's easier to focus on the speck in their eye than the log in our own! **We'll put down a person who is unkind** and never consider how unkind we can be with our thoughts and words! **We'll criticize someone** who we believe is materialistic, and never admit that we entertain selfish and greedy thoughts! **We'll write someone** off who tells us a lie and never admit that often slant the details of our stories to make ourselves look better! **We'll look at the choices** another person is making...and say in our hearts, 'I would never be like him or her,' and forget that before the grace of God broke into our lives, we were in the same spot they were...maybe even worse!

We will do this, almost sub-consciously because it takes the light off of ourselves, and in Chamber's words, “allows us to experience the pleasure of self-righteousness, without the pain of penitence.”

Now...Jesus is saying this to hurt us...but to heal us! So, the question become... *What do we do if we realize that Jesus is speaking to us?*

Let me suggest three things...

First, Remove the Log...

“Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.” Matthew 7:5

Jesus says... **First...get rid of the log in your own eye!** Stop playing (hypocrite) that this couldn't possibly be true of you and do what is necessary to get rid of every hint of judgment, criticism, and condescension.

C.S. Lewis wrote this...

“There is someone I love, even though I don't approve of what he does. There is someone I accept, though some of his thoughts and actions revolt me. There is someone I forgive, though he hurts the people I love the most. That person is me.” C.S. Lewis

Lewis is saying that...We tend to hold people to standards that we would never want to be held to! We tend to criticize people in ways we would never want to be critiqued! If we knew that someone talked about us in the ways we talk about others...we'd be appalled! We must start by looking honestly at our lives...and

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recognize that the things we critique in others are oftentimes the very same characteristics we see and readily forgive in ourselves!

Jesus says...look at the log, and take it out!

Now...we've already seen that pride blinds us and keeps us from seeing just how deep this particular sin runs in us.
So...we won't be able to do this alone!

I'd encourage you to invite someone that you trust to speak into your life. Ask them, "When I'm with you...how do I talk about others? What is my attitude like? Am I gracious and kind or judgmental and harsh?" "Do I build up or tear down?"

Ask...and listen! Then, ask Jesus to reveal the truth about your heart...and once you see that a log is there, confess it to Jesus! And as you do...

Second, Look at the Cross

Look at the cross! The sin of criticism and judgment is one that causes us to spend an inordinate amount of time looking at and dissecting the behavior and actions of others. It's one of the most addictive sins I know of; therefore we'll never overcome this by sheer willpower or discipline! It isn't something we grow past overnight!

We have a sight problem...and the only way to remove the log is to begin looking at something that has the ability not only to correct our vision, but to cure our hearts!

You must look at the cross...

Cross - On the cross we see that the very thing we've done when we've criticized, slandered, and condemned others is the very thing that happened to Jesus!

Jesus was condemned, though He was innocent!

He was ridiculed and slandered, though He did nothing to deserve it!

Jesus was crushed, not only with words and whips and nails, but with our sin! He was crushed so that our dark and destructive hearts could be made whole!

Jesus could have given us the guilty verdict, but He took our penalty to set us free!

He took what we deserved and gave us what we don't deserve!

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The Bible calls this Mercy!

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard (we’re all guilty). Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.”
Romans 3:23-24

God loved you so much He didn’t criticize and condemn you. He allowed His only Son to die in our place, even though we deserved to die!

When you set your eyes on the beauty of the cross...and the mercy of God makes its way into your heart again and again, it will free you! And when you live from a place of freedom and security, it will change you...

And you will have the ability to know and relate to people...not in a way that is crushing, but in a way that is healing!

Finally, Extend Healing Hands

Now, maybe you’ve been asking the question, *“Does this mean that I never identify and point out in someone else’s life something that is going to harm them?”*

Kids: Not at all. If one of my kids runs into a busy street, I’ll do everything in my power to stop them! I’ll yell and scream and tackle them to the ground! But I’ll do it in love, to save them!

When you see someone living in a way that is going to destroy them, if you love them, you’ll do whatever it takes to stop them! The Scriptures instruct us to help one another if we recognize a sinful or destructive pattern in our lives...

But when we do...we must always make sure our motive is to heal, and not to crush!

John 8: In the gospel of John, chapter 8...Jesus encounters a woman who was caught in the act of adultery! As Jesus was teaching, the religious leaders dragged her in front of Him and accused her...stating that the Law of Moses demanded she die, and so they asked Jesus what He wanted to do!

The woman was clearly guilty and the law condemned her! Legally, Jesus had every right to write her off.

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John writes that as the religious leaders demanded an answer from Jesus, and stood with stones in hand ready to put this woman to death, Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust. We don't know what He wrote...but we do know what He said!

"All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone." John 8:7

As Jesus spoke these words...the woman's accusers began to slip away one by one, leaving Jesus alone her...

"Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, 'Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you? No, Lord she said. And Jesus said, 'Neither do I. Go and sin no more.'" John 8:10-11

Jesus didn't condemn her, he freed her! He didn't crush her with words of accusation...He spoke words of healing. Like a skillful surgeon, Jesus went right to the place of sickness and sin in her life...and yet He released her from it!

When we speak to people or about them...do we come with skillful hands to heal or do we carry rocks to crush? Do we speak words of life or condemnation?

How are you known in your home? Workplace? Circles of friends? Are you known as a person who crushes or heals?

Jesus saw this woman's potential...He saw her not for her actions...but for who she could become by His mercy! And he did the same for us!

When we think about and speak to others...when we speak of others...may we see them for who they can become, by the mercy of Christ!

Pray