

Text: Matthew 7:3-5

Title: Specks and Planks

Truth: Dealing with your own sin gets priority over dealing with sin in others.

Date/Location: July 11, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

In the previous message, we discerned two main points. First, that Jesus was not forbidding all kinds of judgment because there are many passages in Scripture that *command* and teach that Christians judge certain things. Jesus Himself commands us to ascertain the truth/fruit/reality of a profession of faith and conduct ourselves accordingly.

You might have listened last time and taken what I said a little too far—namely, hearing that there *is* a valid kind of judgment, you might forget that there is a bad kind of judgment and that the main point of this passage is that our Lord is condemning it! Judging others suits some people just fine. They like doing that. They gossip about it. They draw conclusions, sometimes with a paucity of data, and then run with those conclusions.

Second, we learned that Jesus is forbidding a certain kind of judgment that is harsh, hyper-critical, hate-filled, self-righteous, or unfair.

In this message we will ponder an illustration of this truth with an added dimension: judgment of ourselves before we jump into “helping” others.

I. The Speck

A. Looking into the eye of another person for a small speck illustrates one person passing judgment on another for a relatively small matter. It *is* a matter, but it is pictured as relatively small one in the big scheme of things. Looking at the speck in your brother’s eye is the same thing as making a harsh judgment against your brother. These small things must be evaluated in light eternity; when you do that, it hopefully becomes apparent how they should be prioritized. The speck-judge is a fault-finder, a negative critic. He is destructive instead of constructive.

B. 7:3 “Why do you look at the speck...?” You should not even be *looking* at the speck in your brother’s eye. Our Lord’s question indicates that it is disproportional because of the size of the object, in the first place, and in the second, you really do not even have the ability to take care of something while you harbor an even greater sight-attenuator in your own life that you have not even considered.

Furthermore, you “look” at the little problem in your brother’s life, but you don’t even “notice” the huge problem in your own. Somehow you are intent on investigating others, but have a much less acute sense of vision toward yourself. Note your own sinful inclination to magnify the problems of others while downplaying your own.

C. 7:4: How can you remove the speck? It is “unclear” (pun intended) how you could even focus your own eyes (spiritual life) on the problem if you have severe eye problems of your own. It takes good vision to deal with an eye problem. In other words, it takes a mature Christian to deal with an issue that requires acute spiritual maturity (Galatians 6:1).

D. 7:5 The Lord declares in verse 5 that it is hypocrisy for person who looks at another but does not consider himself, and the person who offers to remove a problem from another but not deal with his own life. See Luke 18:9-14 and Romans 2:1.

E. Illustration: Our son Daniel, when he was a very small child, came up to mom and said he had an “eye lash” in his eye, which hours later in the hospital we learned was an abrasion on his cornea. That injury is a bit more involved and quite a bit more painful than an eyelash! He had more than that in his eye, and it had a big effect on him.

II. The Plank

A. The speck-versus-plank illustration is cast in the form of hyperbole. A hyperbole is “an exaggerated statement or claim not meant to be taken literally.” It makes the scene you imagine in your mind’s eye to be ridiculous, and thus it is memorable. The plank represents any sin that you have, more serious than the one that

your speck-eyed friend has. The illustration is hyperbole; the literal truth is about the sin in your own life.

- B. If you are focused on the speck in your brother's eye, you are guilty of "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel" (Matthew 23:24, and read the context 23:23-28).
- C. To carry the illustration one step farther, perhaps you are spiritually far-sighted. The "near sighted" stuff is lost to your view. We must pray that God will not permit us to fall into that problem of spiritual immaturity. Pray that God will help you to "mind your own business" (1 Thess. 4:11).
- D. Illustration of something through the eye.

III. The Right Way

- A. Instead of being a hypocrite, you must take out the plank in your own eye. That is, deal with your own sin *first*. This will take some time, effort, prayer, help perhaps of others you ask, etc. The first one to cast a stone is the one who has checked to see if he has taken care of his own sin (like John 8:3-11).
- B. Then, you can see clearly to help another brother. Notice that you are not prohibited from helping him. You just have to do it in the proper order.
- C. Notice also that it is a HELP you should be seeking to do, a service. This is very different than the attitude of censorious judgment. Seek restoration instead of criticism. Seek help instead of put-down. This is a basic Christian virtue, and it is important for us to review so we stay on a good path with it.
- D. This "focus" on your own things may seem paradoxical in light of Philippians 2:21. But it will create an environment where mercy will grow. Recognize that from 7:2 the judgment you use toward others will influence the way in which you are judged yourself. If you are harsh toward others, expect God to be harsh toward you. If you are unforgiving, expect God to be unforgiving toward you. Why? Because your unforgiving heart shows that you do not understand and have not experienced God's forgiveness.

I suppose that you would like mercy from God. James 2:13 teaches that judgment without mercy is shown to those who show no mercy. See Matthew 18:28-34 (and prior verses as well). If you want mercy from God, demonstrate it by showing mercy to others.

Perhaps it helps to remember that we are fellow servants with one another of God, who is the judge of all. We must remain in *our* place, and not try to take *His* place.

Conclusion

Spend more time judging yourself than others. Consider your own ways before volunteering yourself to correct another (Gal. 6:1).

Remember that your own internal sins are just as visible to God as the external ones you see in others. Your pride, lack of forgiveness, hate, lust, lack of mercy, impatience, self-righteousness, etc. are all on wide-open display toward God. And God hates those things (Prov. 6:16-19).

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