

2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters

Sermon Series - Focus on Truth

Sermon Title - The Very Dark World of a Judgmental Spirit

Sermon Text - Matthew 7:1-5

Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

“Christ be magnified in me O Christ be magnified
From the altar of my life Christ be magnified in me”

We need to live our lives in such a way that Christ will be magnified! Others need to see Jesus in us and through us! Today we're going to talk about something that does not magnify or glorify Jesus, and is something that we need to avoid at all costs! Let's pray and ask God to teach us by way of His Holy Spirit, and through His Word about this very important topic. Let's pray!

So what are we going to talk about today that would be so bad it would keep us from magnifying or glorifying God? It's called...

The very dark world of a judgmental spirit!

Jesus said very clearly...

Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

Matthew 7:2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

And why is it so bad to judge? It does bad things to those on whom you pass judgment and it does terrible things on you! Here's a very important truth we must focus on: a judgemental spirit indicates some serious heart problems with your spiritual heart and can cause serious spiritual heart problems! Let me share with you a list of potential heart issues a judgmental spirit can either cause or from which a judgmental spirit can originate! Here we go. A judgmental spirit causes or comes from...

Pride, Prejudice, Arrogance, Ignorance, Insincerity, Callousness, Deceptiveness, Unrepentance, and Uncaring!

Our world today needs to be ...

Jolted out of prejudice (I'm better than them)

Jolted out of pride (I know all I need to know)

Jolted out of complacency (I'm fine just the way I am)

Jolted out of hard heartedness (I don't really care, that's their problem)

And it's not just the world that needs to be jolted out of these things. So does the church! Wait, what? Pastor Larry, are you saying that there's people in the church who are judgmental and

have pride, prejudice, complacency and hard heartedness? Well, maybe! Actually yes! God wants to give us wisdom to understand that when it comes to Pride, Prejudice, Arrogance, Ignorance, Insincerity, Callousness, Deceptiveness, Unrepentance, and being Uncaring, even people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and have been forgiven of their sins, if we don't keep our eyes on Jesus and walk in the power and presence of His Holy Spirit then we can allow the old nature to rear its ugly head! You've heard me say it many times and I'm going to say it again, but my life verse is found in 1 Corinthians 10:12-13...

1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

This doesn't mean that a Christian can't sin! It means that we have not only been forgiven of the penalty of sin, we have been given a way to overcome the power of sin in our daily lives! It's not that we won't ever sin, or will ever be perfect in this life, but we can become a little more like Jesus everyday if we're willing to walk in the power of the Spirit and focus on His righteousness! And when we realize that we have been saved by God's good grace and not our good works, how foolish would it be for us to think we are better than anybody! As I've said so many times, I'm not better than anyone, just better off because I've found Jesus! I have to understand that for me to judge others assumes that I have the right to judge them, or that I'm good enough to judge them, and neither of these things are true! Now I may not agree with someone's behavior or their actions and attitudes, but for me to try to judge their motives or their heart, is way beyond my pay grade!

Sometimes my mind forms judgments in a split second before I can do anything about it, but I don't have to express that judgment out loud, and I can make myself question that judgment and remind myself of my own issues! "Mercy for me but not for you" is just plain wrong and is not God's way! Have you ever found yourself condemning in someone else something you also struggle with? Or maybe you don't struggle with that particular thing so it's easier to point a finger at their sin, while you ignore the sin you struggle with. Is it not easy to think of another person's sin as "major sin" while we look at our sin as "minor sin?" We need God's wisdom in regards to how we view others! Jesus painted a pretty humorous picture to help us understand this truth.

Matthew 7:3 "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?"

Matthew 7:4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"

Matthew 7:5 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.

Can you picture that scene? You're trying to get a speck out of their eye but you keep hitting them upside the head with the beam coming from your eye! "Hold still while I get that speck",

then whack, you hit them again with your own 2x4! It's crazy. I have a friend who wrote a song with his band back in 1992 that says...

"I walked in the day, my usual way, looking through a 2 X 4
It colored my view, I couldn't see you Or maybe I just wouldn't"

The log or plank in your eye may be your pride in thinking you're so much better than the poor sinner you're trying to help with their speck of dust. If we only understood, people respond so much better to help when it comes from a person who is merciful because they've received mercy and when it comes from a person who is gracious because they've received grace. Paul put it this way...

1 Corinthians 1:26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

1 Corinthians 1:28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,

1 Corinthians 1:29 so that no one may boast before him.

1 Corinthians 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

How much better would our world be if all of us judged none of us, but left judgment to God and if we gave the same mercy to others that God gave to us? How would that affect the family dynamic at family gatherings? As I've said many times before, this doesn't mean that we don't have convictions, beliefs and morals. It doesn't mean that we just agree with everybody on everything, but the way in which we voice our disagreement is beyond huge! I can be your friend even if we have deep differences of beliefs because no matter who you are or what you believe, or even if you don't believe, you were created in the image of God and Jesus gave His life on the Cross for you! To be sure, my convictions may not allow me to participate with you in some of your activities, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't be there for you if you needed me and that I wouldn't fellowship with you around a meal! But here's what it does mean: Having a judgmental spirit and having good judgment are two different things altogether!

Young people, please hear me out, and single people of all ages, please hear me out! Way too many times have I seen someone not use good judgment in the area of dating because they felt that to analyze or scrutinize the person they were dating was being judgmental. Folks, when it comes to finding the person you are going to spend the rest of your life with, you need to be picky, very picky! I'm not talking about having a mean judgmental spirit towards them, or trying to judge their heart, you don't have the ability or the right to do that. What I'm talking about is not closing your eyes to serious character flaws and maybe moral issues and behaviors that will not only affect your relationship, but will affect your children if you get married and have children. Nobody's perfect, but if a person is abusive, argumentative, angry, demanding, etc, don't buy

Satan's lie that those things will get better once you're married, or that you will be able to change them. If they won't change those things before you're married, barring a miraculous life changing experience with the Lord, things will not get better and will probably get worse after you're married. And if you know some of these things before you start dating someone, don't even go there, because once your emotions are involved objectivity goes out the window and it's hard to make good decisions.

So it's okay to have some predetermined standards for who you will and won't date! That's not being judgmental! Just a little wisdom from 40 plus years of marriage counseling. And when it comes to the people you will spend the bulk of your time with as close friends, remember influence goes both ways. Don't be judgmental in a prideful, arrogant way, and be friendly and caring to all, but use good judgment when choosing your close associates! Okay, back to the sermon! What happens next in our text could be a bit confusing without proper understanding. Jesus makes a statement that at first glance seems out of place, and maybe even judgmental. Let me read it then explain it. Jesus said...

Matthew 7:6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.
Matthew 7:6 If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

What Jesus is saying here is this: if you've allowed Jesus to help you with your sin issues and you in turn want to help others find the peace and forgiveness you've found, that's a good thing, but if they have totally rejected God and His ways, and they don't want your help, if you try to force the issue you may get hurt! So don't judge others, and when you try to help others ask God to give you His wisdom in the way you do so! Don't try to force your views on someone else! Jesus didn't do that. He offered, but never forced! The only time He got forceful was with the dishonest money changers at the temple. And since it was in the temple, Jesus had a right to say, "Not in My Father's house! You're not going to cheat, steal, and abuse others in our house!" The religious leaders of Jesus' day had gotten to a very dark place. They allowed some pretty bad stuff to go on in the temple as long as they got their cut of the profits! And on top of that they had gotten to a place of denying their own sin and judging others for their perceived sin! So what I want to do is give you an illustration of what can happen if you allow yourself to become judgmental towards others by using a powerful example found in the Gospel of Mark. In this passage we will see very clearly why Jesus said what He said in the sermon on the mount concerning a judgmental spirit. Our example will show us...

The Dark Places in the Very Dark World of a Judgmental Spirit - Mark 7:1ff

The Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' day had serious judgmental spirit issues and those issues were taking them to very dark places. These issues were so serious they were causing them to do devastating things to others! Their issues were also robbing them of all that God had intended for them as the chosen people of God! They had lost their purpose, meaning, joy, vision, and hope! Their relationship with God was at an all time low! Listen to this Biblical

example which points out the dark places and the devastating consequences of a judgmental spirit!

Mark 7:1 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and

Mark 7:2 saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed.

Mark 7:3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.

Mark 7:4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

Mark 7:5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

Mark 7:6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

Mark 7:7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

Mark 7:8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

Mark 7:9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

In this example of the judgmental spirit, Jesus surprises the Pharisees with His answer to their question about the washing of hands. He lets them know they had some serious heart conditions which had led them to the very dark world of a judgmental spirit. Had these been physical heart conditions it would have landed them in the hospital in critical care!

Here's the deal...

The dark world of a judgmental spirit is entangled with...

Pride, Prejudice and Arrogance

A person ruled by pride will think they have it all together! They are blind to their own issues thinking they're better than others and believing they know everything! This leads to a judgmental spirit and keeps a person from seeking God. The Psalmist put it this way...

Psa 10:4 In his pride the wicked does not seek Him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

The writer of Proverbs said this...

Prov 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov 16:19 Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

Pride, prejudice and arrogance all go hand in hand. Listen to these words also found in the Psalms...

Psa 94:4 They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers are full of boasting.

Psa 94:5 They crush your people, O LORD; they oppress your inheritance.

Psa 94:6 They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless.

Psa 94:7 They say, "The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed."

The writer of Proverbs puts it this way...

Prov 21:24 The proud and arrogant man--" Mocker" is his name; he behaves with overweening pride.

Jesus had a warning for the prideful, prejudiced, arrogant people who sat in judgment of others...

Matthew 7:2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

A judgmental person is so prideful they will not humble themselves to ask for forgiveness or allow Jesus to take their punishment for them! They're so busy judging others they don't have time for God, or for truth! And pride goes hand in hand with prejudice! People get to a place where they think they are better than others, superior, and somehow think it's okay to treat others like lesser beings. The world has recently seen some horrible examples of this and I won't go into the details. It's hard for me to even get my mind wrapped around some of the despicable and horrible things people do to others when they think they're better than others! Prejudice is truly one of the darkest places you can go!

Having said that, let me ask you a question. Have you ever heard the old saying, "Two wrongs don't make a right?" Sometimes people who have been wrongly judged can be pulled into the same judgmental darkness because of a lack of forgiveness! It's that dark cycle of hatred and vengeance, of being judged by others and judging others! The judgmental spirit of the religious leaders of Jesus' day led them to the dark place of murder, as they had Jesus nailed to the cross. And before they crucified Him they horribly abused Him. Jesus was accused of a lot of things, but Jesus had not led His followers to try and overthrow the political system of His day! He had told them to be good citizens and pay their taxes! He told them to love their enemies. He even told them to follow the teachings of the Pharisees If and when they truly taught the Word of God given through Moses. Jesus was innocent of the charges against Him, but they crucified Him anyway because they had judged Him wrongly! But guess what Jesus did on the Cross...

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

So do not judge, and when someone falsely judges you, do what Jesus did and pray for their forgiveness! Not an easy thing to do, but so vital for our own spiritual health if we want to steer clear of other serious issues associated with a judgmental spirit.

The dark world of a judgmental spirit is entangled with...

Ignorance and Insincerity

You don't know what's on another person's heart, or why they do what they do! Only God knows the heart! But the religious leaders of Jesus' day walked in ignorance. But it was not just a Pharisee issue, or a Jewish issue. It was also a Gentile issue, and became an issue in the early church. Paul wrote the following words to the Christians at a church in Ephesus...

Eph 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Eph 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Paul tells followers of Christ that they must no longer live the same way they used to! Jesus had saved their souls but also wanted to change their minds and give them a new non judgmental attitude! I know I'm going to just blow some of your minds with what I'm about to say, but sometimes I listen to Bluegrass Music. Yep, this old rocker has a soft spot in his heart for some good old Bluegrass. I was driving one day and heard a song by Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers. Here's some of the lyrics...

"She was only driving 20 on the highway into town. The man behind her honked his horn
Saying, 'Put that cell phone down, You're gonna make me late to work, Honey I ain't got all day.'

He didn't know her dad was on the line, Telling her, her mom just passed away
It's hard to know what someone's going through, Unless you're standing right there in their shoes

Lord help me stop and understand, Before I rush to judge my fellow man
Life itself can be a battlefield, And we're all fighting some kind of war"

So we have to remind ourselves that we don't know what someone else is going through or what's on their heart! We just don't know. We have to humbly admit our ignorance. But in our example of the religious leaders their judgmental spirit showcased their...

Insincerity

Jesus said...

Mark 7:6 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

People who are judgmental fall prey to insincerity because they are focused on outward appearances. God doesn't want a people who just look good on the outside! It's not a religious show God wants, but a relationship that shows the world what it looks like to love God and to be loved by God! If you've ever been told something special by someone only to find out it was insincere, that hurts! How do we not think God is not hurt by insincerity? And He absolutely knows our hearts! No hiding the truth from God! And here's another thing we certainly want to avoid...

The dark world of a judgmental spirit is entangled with...

Uncaring, Calloused Hearts

Mark 7:7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

These judgmental souls did not care about people, just their legalistic rules. And while some of the things they said were based on truth their application and practice was false. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus says this...

Mat 23:2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

Mat 23:3 So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

Mat 23:4 They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Mat 23:5 "Everything they do is done for men to see...

Jesus told His followers not to emulate the actions of the Pharisees, because they were hypocrites and didn't care about the hurts and hardships of others! This uncaring attitude and hypocrisy was a result of their being...

Calloused (Hard Hearted)

Jesus said...

Mark 7:8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

Mark 7:9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

And what were the commands of God? We talk about them a lot around here at Northshore Church because they are the basis, the foundation, for our Mission...

"Transforming Worship, People, and the World!"

How do we do this? Jesus said the greatest command of God is to...

Mark 12:30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

Mark 12:31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

The Pharisees had set aside the commands of God and it was destroying their spiritual hearts.

The Psalmist put it this way...

Psa 73:7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity ; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.

Psa 73:8 They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression.

Psa 73:9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.

In case you're wondering if you have this condition you might consider the following verse...

Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

That verse just seems to keep popping up! Right? Another symptom of this serious spiritual heart condition known as a judgmental spirit is found in the fact that...

The dark world of a judgmental spirit is entangled with...

Deception and Unrepentance

Mark 7:11 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God),

Mark 7:12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother.

The religious leaders were finding ways to be deceptive and to break the spirit of the law. The spirit of the law was that children should care for their elderly parents, however, there were those who didn't want to do that so they would claim their extra funds were dedicated to God and the religious leaders would allow that. I'm pretty sure those funds never got to God. The writer of Proverbs said this...

Prov 6:12 A scoundrel and villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth,

Prov 6:13 who winks with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers,

Prov 6:14 who plots evil with deceit in his heart-- he always stirs up dissension.

The Pharisees were always stirring up dissension.

Paul put it this way in Colossians...

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

And one of the most dangerous symptoms of a judgmental spirit is that it becomes...

Unrepentant

Jesus told the religious leaders this...

Mark 7:13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.

They did many ungodly things because they were unrepentant. Repent means to turn away from evil and to turn towards God! Their hearts had become unrepentant. Jesus said this in The Gospel of Luke...

Luke 13:3 ...But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

And He said this in Matthew's Gospel...

Mat 13:15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

Folks, there's the answer for the very dark world of a judgmental spirit. See with your eyes, hear with your ears, and understand with your heart that you are a sinner, no better than any other sinner in this old world, and without the grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and salvation offered to you by Jesus and through Jesus, you would stand before the judgment of God someday with no hope! But when we repent and believe, God saves our souls immediately and begins the lifelong work of making us into the image of His Son Jesus! And I'll close with an example of a Pharisee who was in the deepest depths of the dark world of a judgmental spirit, but saw the light and gloriously changed! Saul, better known as Paul, who was once a Pharisee of Pharisees who had gotten so judgmental and hard-hearted that he was throwing Christians in prison and was present at the stoning of Stephen, giving his approval to the execution. But when on his way to persecute more Christians, the very dark world of his judgmental spirit was confronted by the glorious light of our Lord. He later shared with King Agrippa his story.

The Cure

Acts 26:12 "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

Acts 26:13 About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.

Acts 26:14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

A goad was a wooden instrument that farmers used to get a stubborn ox to move. If the ox kicked against the goad there was pain! Evidently God had already been convicting Paul's heart, because God mentioned how Paul was kicking back against God's calling on his heart. Paul continues...

Acts 26:15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.

Acts 26:16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.

Acts 26:17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Paul had a choice to make! What would he do? Continue to kick against the goads, or be obedient. Paul gives us the answer in verse 19...

Acts 26:19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.

On that day, everything changed for Paul. He got a new heart. Paul would go on to write much of the New Testament and share these words of testimony about his old judgmental spirit and his new life in Lord...

Phil 3:4b ...If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

Phil 3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;

Phil 3:6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Phil 3:7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Phil 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Phil 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Phil 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Phil 3:11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

Phil 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Folks, that's a Pharisee freed from the very dark world of a judgmental spirit! You and I can have the same freedom! Let's pray!