

“JUDGE AND JURY”

Matthew 7:1-5

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INTRODUCTION:

1) It's a very serious matter: Like many people, I was summoned to serve Jury duties over 15 years ago. Having seen court proceedings on movies many times, most of us would think that there isn't much to worry in knowing what to do and how to do it. But when you are sitting in a real courtroom with the judge seated in it, facing the reality you know this is not a movie but a real case, the tense feeling of seriousness is beyond description. You need to be so alert to the evidences presented, listen very carefully the arguments on both sides, maintain a neutral attitude on the case and the defendant. This is a very scary experience because you know if you don't do all the above the right way, you may contribute to the formation and decision of making a wrong verdict that will result in failure of justice. In that case, a criminal may walk away from the court free, or an innocent person may be put in jail for a crime he had nothing to do with. Think of the consequences of his life, his family, and the legal system, you know this is a very serious matter.

2) It's a very serious mistake: But in our everyday life, we seldom, if any, take the duty of judging people with the same level of seriousness. Usually we will judge people whatever way we like without giving any thought to the consequences our judgment may hurt and harm them. We usually give our judgment without much information, much less solid evidence, mostly from a negative personal or bias perception on that person. We form our opinions based on our impression of the past, mostly from hear-said. Then we serve as a jury and judge to render judgment without giving that person opportunity to present his evidence or reasons. Compounded with the high frequencies we do this in our life time, we had rendered countless unjust verdicts that could inflict harm to lots of people, and we usually don't care. Just imagine if you are sitting on the defendant seat in a court room, and both the judge and the jury are so bias and unfair in their handling of your case, and they never give you a fair chance to present your case and evidences. Now you know doing things like that is so wrong, so bad, but we just keep doing that to our fellow men without feeling regret or sorry.

THE DANGERS OF JUDGING OTHERS: (7:1-2)

1) The danger of a boomerang: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge other, you will be judged, and with the measure

you use, it will be measured to you.” (7:1-2) Everyone knows that judging isn't a good thing, but most people will do just that: Always ready to judge others. There are countless reasons why we love to judge people:

- a) We think we know it all to voice our opinion;
- b) We believe there is something wrong in the other person;
- c) We feel we are on a moral or intellectual higher ground, or
- d) We try to please someone by judging another.

By looking at these possible reasons why we want to judge others, we know that none of them is a solid ground to do that. If we all use these same pretext to judge others, how easy it is others may use the same measure to judge us. Taking judging people lightly is a dangerous act that could have unintended consequences. Remember this Golden Rule: “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” (7:12) Do we remember the saying: What goes around, comes around. The Bible says, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” (Gal 6:7)

2) The danger of omission: “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?” (7:3) Here we see several important lessons:

a) We all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:23) We all are sinners before God. The Bible never tries to cover up sins.

b) To ignore our own sin when we judge others isn't what we should do. How can a sinner judge another sinner, even if their sins are different?

c) We tend to be bias on sin: When we pass judgment on the sin in others we tend to ignore our own sin; or we will magnify the sin on others, and try hard to minimize our own sins, and that is bias or plain dishonest.

Jesus wants us to be honest of our own sins before we think we have the right to judge the sins of others. In handling a woman caught in the act of adultery, Jesus said to her accusers and potential executioners, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” (John 8:7) The Lord wants us to remember our own sin before we judge the sins of others. Sins of commission are sins, but sins of omissions are also sins. Ignoring or overlooking our own sins doesn't give us the right to judge others. Jesus did not ignore sins of anyone, but he warned us not to become vigilantes to judge and condemn the sins of others when we are as sinful as those we judge.

3) The danger of unjust verdict: “How can you say to your brother: Let me take the speck out of your eye, when all the time there is a plant in your own eye?” (7:4) Three things that contribute to the unjust judgment in this verse:

a) We may be worse sinners: We had studied the difference between a saw-dust speck and the plank in the past. Jesus used this obvious comparison to show us that those who are always ready to judge others may be worse sinners than those they judge. For a worse sinner to judge another sinner who may be less sinful isn't what justice is about.

b) We can't judge correctly: And the reason is we just don't have the correct vision to remove the speck from someone else's eye. We are blocked by our own sins, our own corrupted condition that we may try to judge others on a twisted view, wrong perspective, and therefore, our judge can't be right nor just.

c) Our best intention won't work: It doesn't matter how sincere or honest we may think we are, we just don't have that ability to be a judge or a jury. Often times, we think we are trying to help someone to do the right thing by judging and correcting their problems or wrongs, the end result is often not as we think it should work.

HANDLE JUDGING JESUS' WAY:

1) Refrain from playing a judge: “Do not judge.” (7:1a) Unless it is your duty to judge, like a judge in the court of law, or you are in position of authority and it is your duty to correct wrongs for the good of all others, we are told not to judge. Even Jesus refused to be a judge when he was asked to. (Luke 12:13-14) God has different plans for different life. We are to seek His will in our lives and do what is needed to fulfill his will. When God doesn't put us in positions to judge, it isn't our job to do that.

2) We need to remove our own planks: “You hypocrites, take the planks out of your own eyes, and then you will see clear to remove the speck from your brother's eye.” (7:5) There are a few important lessons:

a) We need to know the sequence: Deal with our own wrongs, before we try to correct wrongs on others. Most of us do the opposite: We seldom see the need to self-cleansing before we try to clean others. No wonder Jesus called these people hypocrites.

b) We need to be humble: Pride is the root of all judging against others: We think we are on the right side, we know it all, we are qualified to judge or give advice because we think they don't know right and wrong, good or bad. Many of us judge others not because we know better, but because we have too much pride or self-righteousness, and that is a sin.

3) Don't get both in troubles: When I say “both”, I mean when you get yourself into judging, you can mess up lives on both sides: you, the pretended

judge and the one you judged. Moses got into lots of trouble and had to run for his life when he volunteered to be a judge to correct something he saw as wrong. (Ex 2:11-15) This is something we all need to know: When God doesn't appoint you a judge, don't try to be one. How do you know to remove the speck from your brother's eye? Are you sure you can do a good job and not hurting his eye? The Bible says: "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master, he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." (Rom 14:4) If your brother really needs help, the Lord God will help him to correct wrong and do right.

ADDITIONAL BIBLICAL WAYS: The Bible doesn't want us to judge on others. That doesn't mean we stay away from helping our brothers when we see him falling in trouble. In fact God want us to help one another when we face burdens of trouble: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal 6:2) Here are some more biblical ways to help a brother in his needs other than judging. From easier to harder to do:

1) Curbing our tongues from judging: Regardless how wrong your brother may be, or how much good will you may have, don't judge because God said we shouldn't do that: "Let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to any stumbling block of obstacle in your brother's way." (Rom 14:13) Paul put it this way: Judgments are stumbling blocks. Any time we judge a brother, we are not helping him but likely to cause him to fall again.

2) Bring him to the throne of grace: God loves all of us, including the brother who may have fallen short of God's glory. God is his God as much as our God. We can and need to bring him to the throne of grace, pray for him that God will help him to stand up again. (Rom 14:4)

3) Share godly counsel with love: We all understand the difference between judging and counseling, and we know they can achieve different results. We were told in Phil 2:1-2, "If you have any encouragement from being united in Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." I list this one at last because counseling a fallen brother is a difficult thing to do.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS:

1) Best strategy of self defense: Jesus gives us a good strategy of self defense against being judged: "DO NOT judge". Yes, even if we never judge anyone,

there isn't guarantee that you won't be judged. The point here is: If we all follow this rule, no one will be judged, starting from yourself. No one likes to be judged, be it fair or unfair. So, if we all follow the advice not to judge, we will be safe from being judged. Judging those who judge us is a natural response of retaliation. We see this vividly from recent election debates: The candidates eventually sank into mud-slinging, smearing, judging others from all possible direction. Most of the offensive candidates ended up lost support of their constituents. In the most recent debate in late February, among the Republican candidates, Marco Rubio waged a war of offense against the frontrunner, but he lost shamefully in the primaries the following week. He later said he regretted what he did and his kids were so embarrassed to see their dad did that. No one likes to befriend with people who act as judge and jury against their fellow men, be it at work, in neighborhood, community or church. The habit of judging can only hurt those who love to judge.

2) Acts of judgment seldom work: How often acts of criticism had worked in changing people and their attitude or actions? Seldom! Right? If criticism doesn't work to make anyone change for the better, how can anyone think that judgment, a much more negative or even hostile act, may bring out any thing good for our brother? The fact is judgment on others can only produce hostility from the judged, alienating relationship between the judge and the judged. If judgment is rendered with vicious intend or ignorance or bias, the outcome could be much worse. Why would anyone knowingly do anything we know for sure they won't work?