

Learning to See (Part 1)

Introduction

The Text

³⁷ “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

³⁹ He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.” (Luke 6:37–42)

What Do We Want Our Church to Be Known for?

- A. As a pastor of a church, one of the things you do is think about what you want your church to be known for.
 - 1. And I don’t mean this in any egocentric sort of way. I mean—when we gather for worship and people come in and visit us, or when we scatter out on mission in the city—what’s the culture of our community like? What will be known for?
 - a. I’ve told you before (even again just last week, I believe): I want to be known as the church that just can’t get over the cross—we keep talking about the cross, we keep singing about the cross, we settle our identities deep down into the cross, we start to look more and more like the cross in the way we lay our lives down in love for one another and for the world.
- B. But I suppose the flip side to this is what starts to surface in our text here this morning. If I had to identify what I don’t want our church to be known for—the anti-cross community as it were—well, it’s all pretty much outlined right here by Jesus.
 - 1. I don’t want to be known as a church that’s quick to judge others, condemning, unforgiving, withholding and stingy.
 - 2. I don’t want to be known as a church that’s blind in our pride, as a place where the people think they are above everyone else.
 - 3. I don’t want to be known as the church with the beam in its eye. We just drop the Bible on people’s broken hearts. We give them black eyes in the name of Jesus. “You go there, you won’t find healing, you’ll just get hurt even more than you already are.”
 - a. You see, churches are often known more for what they’re against than what they’re for; known more for what they hate than what they love; known more for their laws than their grace; known more for their judgments than their mercies.

- C. I don't want us to be one of those churches. And, do you know what? Jesus doesn't want us to be one of those churches either!

What Does Jesus Want His Church to Be Known for?

- A. That's why He says what He says in our text this morning. We know from v. 20 that these words are directed to His "disciples". They're words for the church; words for those who want to follow Him; words for those whom He is trying to raise up and send out.

- 1. Do you want to be one of those? I do. So let's listen carefully to what He says here.

- B. In this text, Jesus deals with: (1) The Disciple's Genetics (vv. 37-38); (2) The Disciple's Training (vv. 39-40); and (for next week) (3) The Disciple's Ministry (vv. 41-42).

(1) The Disciple's Genetics (vv. 37-38)

- A. In these two verses, Jesus gives His disciples four commands. The first two are put negatively: "Judge not", "condemn not"; the last two are put positively: "forgive", "give".

The Two Negative Commands

- A. In the first two commands, Jesus is dealing with the critical spirit that ought not to characterize His disciples.

- 1. To "judge" someone is to set myself over them and cut them down.

- 2. To "condemn" someone just takes this judgment to its logical end. We are no longer merely cutting them down now, we are, in essence, cutting them off. It is to say: "I'm through with you and, you know what, God is through with you too!"

- a. This condemnation is the opposite of the love Paul calls us to in 1 Cor 13:7: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

- i. It's the opposite of all that God, who is love, stands for: " ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16-17).

- (1) God so loves the world that He would cut down and cut off His only beloved Son so that He wouldn't have to do such things to us, though we deserve it!

- B. When we judge and condemn others, we snuff out the light of the cross, and say in not so many words: "What Jesus did there isn't enough to save someone as far gone as you!"

1. Have you ever said that to someone (if not with your words, then with your actions)? Has someone in the church ever said that to you?
 - a. That's not the spirit that ought to characterize a disciple of Christ!
 - i. He's the God of the resurrection. He takes dead things and brings them to life. He can do that for your spouse, your kid, your parent, or whoever. And He can do it for you!

The Two Positive Commands

- A. In the second two commands, Jesus is dealing with the generous spirit that ought to characterize His disciples.
 1. What's translated "**forgive**" here is, in the Greek, a word which more broadly means: "**to grant acquittal, set free, release, pardon**" (BDAG). It's a word that conjures up imagery of cell doors being opened and prisoners being released.
 - a. That's what forgiveness is, when we stop to think about it, right? It's letting people out of our prison. We go from "You owe me, and you will sit in this cell until you pay me back!" to "You are free! I forgive you!"
 2. To "**give**" here again just takes this forgiveness to its logical end. Here's the astonishing thing about the Christian: We don't just forgive our enemies, we "**ble**ss" them (v. 28).
 - a. Meaning: I don't just release you from my prison, I shower you with my blessing! I don't just forgive, I give.
- B. Is there anyone in your prison right now? Is anyone in your life down in the dungeons of your heart? They hurt you too deeply. You're not about to release them now.
 1. Christ's words come to you in this text: "Open the cell door and let them out."
 - a. This is the generous spirit that ought to characterize a disciple of Christ.

Salvation by Works?!

- A. Now, when once we put these commands back in the context of their two verses, we find ourselves asking one very troubling question: Is Jesus promoting salvation by works here?
- B. Look carefully at vv. 37-38 again, noting now both the command and the consequence given when obeyed: "**Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;**³⁸ **give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. [And then He comes down in the last part of v. 38 and sums it up like this:] For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."**
 1. Now what in the world is that?! If I am loving, then I get God's love? And, by inference, if I'm not, I won't? That sounds like salvation by works to me. Where's the gospel in that?!

- C. This is the danger of going through the Bible section by section as we inevitably must do. We can miss the larger context. In this case, we can miss the connection between our text and what immediately precedes it in v. 36: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” “Judge not . . . condemn not . . . forgive . . . give . . .”
1. The call for us to be merciful (not judging or condemning, but forgiving and giving) is grounded in the mercy God has already been showing us.
 2. And, even more than this, by calling God our “Father” here, Jesus makes it plain He is talking to those who have been born again, adopted into the family of God, and now draw from His gene pool.
- D. My son Levi is now almost five months old and there’s discussion among our family and friends regarding who he looks more like—Megan or myself? I see a little bit of both. And I suppose I should. He’s our kid. He’s going to look like us.
1. But now, don’t you see, when we include v. 36, we realize that this is the whole point of this discussion. Your Father is merciful. Or, back up in, v. 35, your Father “is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.”
 - a. Therefore, His sons and daughters will be merciful and kind. His children will look like Him. We have His genetics.

Mercy to and through

- A. So vv. 37-38 do not present us with some sort of salvation by works. But they do however give us great cause for sober reflection and self-evaluation.
1. They remind us that though God has broken the scales in His dealings with us, we will be tempted to take them back out and use them in our dealings with others. They remind us that we can rejoice in the flow of His mercy to us, while refusing to let that same mercy flow out through us to others.
 - a. They remind us of how dangerous such a thing is before God! For in damming up the flow of His mercy, we can damn ourselves in the end.
 - i. Or to use Jesus’ words here: “[W]ith the measure you use it will be measured back to you” (v. 38b).
- B. So I encourage you, don’t push back on your Father when the commands come and they are hard. He is making something wonderful of you. He is making you like Himself.
1. And this leads me now to the second heading...

(2) The Disciple’s Training (vv. 39-40)

The Father's Genetics and the Son's Training

- A. In one sense, it's not enough to simply have the Father's genetics. Because of these temptations, because of the constant drift of our old fallen nature, we need the Son's training as well. We need to learn from Him how to be human again.
- B. To use Levi once more as an analogy. I never actually realized this, but when you bring your newborn baby home from the hospital, you're supposed to keep your baby very close to you—against your skin, in your arms, always in the same room as you, etc.
 - 1. Now parents usually just do this naturally, but I guess there's profound physiological reasons for it. One of these reasons is he actually learns to breathe from us. The pacing of a newborn's breathing, the rhythm of it, is often scattered and irregular. And so as we hold him close in those early days, he learns to key his breathing off of ours. He learns the rhythm of breath and life.
 - a. In other words, having Megan's and my genetics isn't enough. He needs to learn from us what it means to be human.
- C. And this is precisely what we need from Jesus. We need to stay close to Him and learn from Him. The word disciple literally means "learner".

The Blind Leading the Blind

- A. But Jesus knows that, though this is what we desperately need, there's still an impulse in our flesh that will resist it at every turn. That's why He says some of the things He says next.
- B. Look at v. 39 in particular: "He also told them a parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?'"
 - 1. I guess around Palestine in Jesus' day falling into a pit was actually a thing. In their perennial search for water, the ground was left pocked and pitted—holes all over the place where people had dug down to make wells or whatever.
 - a. So walking around as a blind man in Palestine would be dangerous thing. You wouldn't dare attempt it alone. You would need someone who could see to lead you.
- C. But the picture Jesus gives us here is a blind man who is not only walking around without help, he has taken it upon himself to lead others.
 - 1. No longer, then, is this merely a dangerous thing, it's an outrageously arrogant thing. That a blind man would think he is ready to lead others?! That a man who cannot see himself, thinks himself able to help others see?!
- D. He gets to the heart of the matter in the next verse when He says: "A disciple is not above his teacher. . ." (v. 40).

1. “You’re going to want to pull away from Me. You’re going to want to run ahead of Me. You’re going to think you know better than Me. But I’m telling you, you need to learn from Me. Let Me teach you.”
 - a. Is anyone there with God right now? You know what He says about this or that thing, but you just don’t want to listen. You think you know better. O brother/sister, turn back!

The Goal of Discipleship

- A. Jesus identifies the goal of discipleship in the last part of v. 40: “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”
 1. So the ultimate goal of discipleship to Jesus is that the disciple becomes “like” Jesus.
 2. But Jesus puts alongside this the idea of being “fully trained”. And there’s this beautiful sense to the word translated here that more broadly includes the idea of being repaired or restored.
 - a. It’s the word used to describe what the fishermen James and John were doing with their nets in [Mark 1:19](#): they were “mending” them.
- B. So discipleship to Jesus is being repaired, restored, mended by Him in such a way that we start to look more and more like Him when it’s all done. He is what repaired humanity looks like. And He invites us to follow Him and learn from Him.

Mending His Disciples

- A. We could think of how this played out in the lives of His disciples. Think of how their hearts were mended during their time following behind Jesus. Think of all the things they first were confused by, objected to, but later came to imitate.
- B. Let me just give you two examples:
- C. Do you remember when Jesus was talking with that Samaritan woman by the well. His disciples had stepped away to get food and when they came back we read that: “They marveled that he was talking with a woman” ([John 4:27](#)).
 1. They didn’t get it. This woman was beneath them, and even more, as a Samaritan, she was unclean.
 - a. But Jesus cares about her—the woman, the Samaritan, the adulteress, the outcast. There was no flash of judgment in His eyes. There was no sting of condemnation in His words. There was only kindness and mercy.
 - i. And the disciples are kind of hanging back, watching this, learning what it looks like to breathe.

D. Or do you remember that time when people are so stoked on Jesus that they're bringing their kids to Him just so He could touch them? And we read that: "¹³ . . . the disciples rebuked them. [They didn't get it.]¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God . . . ¹⁶ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them" (Mark 10:13–15, 16).

1. You see, kids weren't just a nuisance to Him, a hindrance to His mission. They were a central part of His mission. So He brings them close and gives them His time, and His touch, and His care.

a. And, again, the disciples are kind of hanging back, watching this, learning what it looks like to breathe.

E. And, finally, later, when Christ is crucified and raised, and He pours out His Spirit upon His disciples, all the training starts to come together and make sense. And it's then that we start to hear them say things like James does in James 1:27: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction."

1. The very demographics the disciples once avoided are now the demographics they are particularly passionate about. Because they watched Jesus, they learned from Jesus, they'd been fully trained by Jesus, they'd been put back together by Jesus.

a. They've had their stereotypes, their self-exalting pride, their blind impulses overcome by Him, and His Spirit is leading them in the new way.

Mending Us

A. Does anyone here need to be mended, restored, put back together? I've got good news for you: that's precisely what Christ is committed to doing in your life.

1. Follow Him, stay close to Him, learn from Him. Spend time in His word, spend time in prayer, spend time with His people. Let Him teach you, let Him train you, let Him make you like Himself. Let Him make you human again, renewed in the image of your Creator.

B. It's only when we are committed to this sort of a thing that we can begin to talk about the disciple's ministry, which is where we will pick this text up next time.