

Learning to See (Part 2)

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).

The Disciple’s Ministry

- A. This is now the second part to what we began last week. We set our sights this morning on vv. 41-42 which deal with what I called: The Disciple’s Ministry.
 - 1. Jesus has great plans for us! He wants us to be useful in His kingdom, ministers of His truth and love to those around us.
 - a. But here in these two verses he identifies one major hurdle to such a goal. And He’s facing it head on!

Judge Not?!

- A. To set us up for this discussion, let me make a quick comment on the opening words there in v. 37, lest there be any confusion: “Judge not . . .”
- B. Apart from [John 3:16](#), my guess is that this is one of the most well-known verses in all the Bible. Perhaps it’s also one of the most misunderstood.
 - 1. In this post-modern world that we live in, where all truth is relative, where tolerance wears the crown, these words have been turned on believers as a way of saying: “Who are you to tell me what’s right or wrong, good or bad, true or false—even your own Bible says, ‘Judge not.’”
 - a. And due to the rising volume of this chorus in our culture, we as Christians often have a deep unsettling about whether we can or even should stand for truth or not. Are we just being judgmental? Perhaps they’re right. After all, Jesus does say, “Judge not.”
 - i. But what does He mean by this?

- C. It is clear even from the immediate context that Jesus is not categorically banning all forms of judgment. For He comes down in the last part of v. 42 and gives us the very goal of this whole discussion: “[T]hen you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.”
 - 1. In other words: It’s not as if we stop seeing and addressing error or sin in one another. But it is that now, if and when we see and address such things, we do so in a radically different way.
 - a. V. 37 judgment is arrogant, condemning, destructive. V. 42 judgement is of an entirely different spirit: humble, loving, reparative. And Jesus’ goal now is to get us from former to the latter.
- D. And He’s going to try to help us make this move by bringing up some stuff that’s hard to face about ourselves in vv. 41-42.
 - 1. We’re going to follow His words here through two headings: (1) The Heights of Our Hypocrisy (vv. 41-42a); and (2) The Depths of Our Humility (v. 42b).

(1) The Heights of Our Hypocrisy (vv. 41-42a)

The Speck and the Log

- A. When we look at vv. 41-42a, the first thing we notice is the utter absurdity of the image Jesus uses. There’s a man with a “speck”—or splinter, or wood chip—in his eye. Maybe from doing too much yardwork or something like that.
- B. But that’s never fun, right? So in walks this other dude and he takes it upon himself to help: “I’ve got you brother. I know just what to do with that speck. Just hold still.”
 - 1. But there’s one massive problem. Where the first guy has a speck in his eye, this second guy’s got a “log”—a piece of heavy timber, the kind of wooden beams that would be used to support roofs around Palestine—in his eye.
 - a. So before he ever even gets to the splinter he’d probably just knock the brother unconscious with the giant beam protruding from his face.
- C. He thinks he’s helping, but he’s just causing more pain!

Why and How?

- A. Initially, we laugh at the image, right? And then we come to be convicted by it. Jesus is getting at something here, something that’s in me and in you.
 - 1. And the force of His point comes at us in the interrogatives—the question words that are just left hanging in the air to haunt us: “Why?” and “How?”—“⁴¹Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?^{42a} 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?” (vv. 41-42a).

- B. With these two questions, Jesus puts his finger on a very uncomfortable reality. He is calling us quite forcefully to face our own tendency towards what we might call: self-deception.
 - 1. There is something in me that distorts the way I see me, and consequently, the way I see God, other people, and the facts of life around me. Jesus is saying there is something wrong with my eyes!

Adam & Eve

- A. When once we consider it, we realize straightaway that this is quite an ancient problem. We see it emerge all the way back in the pointing fingers of Eden.
 - 1. We remember Adam’s self-defense: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:12). And Eve’s is no different: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen 3:13).
 - a. No one is willing to own their part in the mess. But O how clearly they can see the part played by others. “O I know they’re wrong. But me? I’m just the victim here.” Self-deception.

David & Bathsheba

- A. And this sort of thing just carries on into humanity from here. Perhaps no clearer illustration of this truth, biblically speaking, is that of David when he’s confronted by Nathan in [2 Sam 12:1-7](#).
 - 1. We remember David, King of Israel, had lusted after Bathsheba, committed adultery with her, and then, when she got pregnant, he arranged for the death of her husband so that no one would ever find out.
 - a. And, somehow, it seems, he justified these things to himself. He felt okay with it all, or, at least, had sufficiently numbed his conscience to it.
- B. “¹And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, ‘There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor.’²The rich man had very many flocks and herds,³ but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him.’⁴Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.’⁵Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die,⁶ and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.’⁷Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man!’” (2 Sam 12:1–7).

 - 1. And David’s undone! But notice Nathan’s methods here. He uses a hypothetical story of another man, not David, who’s essentially done the same things David’s done. And when

David hears of this other man's sins, O how he sees them so clearly: "David's anger was greatly kindled against the man" (v. 5).

- a. In other words, his faculties for judging others, spot on. He can see the speck in another from a mile away.
- b. But, and here's the point: What he immediately sees so clearly in the man of the story, he had not seen in himself until this very moment. There's a big old beam in his eye!

C. What is that?! "Why?" and "How?"

The Church

A. Now Jesus knows that this same sort of self-deception will find its way even into the church.

1. We see the error and sin in everyone else but ourselves. And we start beating each other with Bible verses and giving each other black eyes in the name of Jesus. We think that we're being helpful, but truly we're harming one another!

B. In the church, when it comes to seeing and addressing error and sin in one another, there are really two main motives we like to claim.

1. I'm going to identify each of these and then I want to let Martin Lloyd-Jones have a brief word with us regarding them.

C. The first motive we like to claim is: "I'm just concerned for truth"—"So when I see any doctrinal error in you, right away, I've got to point it out. I've got to defend God's glory. I've got to stand for truth."

1. But here's Lloyd-Jones on the matter: "We like to persuade ourselves that we are really concerned about truth and righteousness, and that that is our only interest. We claim that we do not want to be unfair to people, that we do not want to criticize, but that we are really concerned about truth! Ah, says our Lord in effect, if you were really concerned about truth, you would be judging yourself. But you do not judge yourself; therefore your interest is not really in truth" (p. 442).

- a. We're picking apart everyone else in the name of truth, but we could never stand under the same scrutiny. So is it really truth we are after? Or something else?

D. The second motive we like to claim: "I'm just concerned for love"—"I've got to point out every fault, every blemish, because I love you. Really, this hurts me more than it hurts you."

1. But, again, here's Lloyd-Jones on the matter: "The fact . . . is that we are not really concerned about helping this other person; we are interested only in condemning him. We pretend to have this great interest; we pretend that we are very distressed at finding this blemish. But in reality . . . (and this is the horrible part), we are really glad to discover it" (p. 443).

- a. We claim to love this other person, but, if that were so, why do we take this strange delight in pointing out their wrongs? Is it really love we are after? Or something else?
- E. Now, I am not saying that this is the sort of thing every one of us in this church is doing. Far from it! Many are genuinely concerned for both truth and love and approach such things with humility and wisdom.
- 1. But I am saying (along with Jesus) that, whoever you are, however long you've been a Christian, you will find in your flesh, a current, an undertow pulling you into this sort of sickness, and we must kick against it!

Answering the Original Questions

- A. But before we get into just how we kick against it, I realize that I still have yet to do what I initially set out to do—that is, answer Jesus' questions: "Why?" and "How?"
- 1. To this point, all we've really done is confirm that such a thing as this self-deception is but we've not fully dealt with why and how it is.
- B. I'm going to call on biblical counselor David Powlison to help us on this point. He sets up the issue this way: "Interestingly, modern secular thought has spent a lot of time probing our resistance to knowing ourselves accurately. Tracing such 'resistance' became a staple of serious thought about human nature in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nietzsche, Marx, . . . Freud, Jung, Adler . . . all agreed that people resist looking in the mirror. . . . But they could never agree on what we were avoiding . . ." (p. 38).
- 1. In other words: They saw clearly the problem of self-deception, but they could never agree on an answer to the "Why?" and "How?" questions.
 - a. Why are we so blind to the beam in our own eyes? How can this be? What are we avoiding? What are we hiding from?
- C. Powlison provides the answer to these questions by quoting from the Puritan pastor Richard Sibbes: "It [would be] an easy thing to be a Christian, if religion stood only in a few outward works and duties, but to take the soul to task, and to deal [thoroughly] with our own hearts, and to let conscience have its full work, and to bring the soul into spiritual subjection unto God, this is not so easy a matter, because the soul out of self-love is [reluctant] to enter into itself, lest it should have other thoughts of itself than it [desires to] have" (p. 33).
- 1. Put in layman's terms: Because I love myself, I don't want to look too intently at myself, because I know, if God were to really open my eyes to what's there, I won't like what I see. The light of God shines in and there's roaches scattering everywhere in my heart.
 - a. I'm not in control. I'm not all put together. I'm not righteous or good in and of myself. I'm not healthy. I'm not strong. I'm a scared, broken sinner in need of a Savior just like everyone else!

- D. But I don't want to see this, I don't want to face this. So I hide myself from the light of God and I focus my attention on what's wrong with you. If I can situate myself a little bit higher than you, I don't feel so bad about me.
 - 1. Such judgmentalism distracts us away from our own mortality, it inebriates our own sense of weakness and insignificance, it clouds any clear sighting of our own sinfulness and depravity. It allows us for a moment to forget our desperate need for God, while we instead pretend to be Him.
- E. Which is why Jesus comes out from this whole discussion with the troubling charge: "You hypocrite!" (v. 42a). It's a word in the Greek that referred to wearing a theatrical mask. "You're just acting, and deep down, you know it!"

(2) The Depths of Our Humility (v. 42b)

Take the Log Out of Your Own Eye

- A. So what in the world are we to do? Well, Jesus tells us as much: "first take the log out of your own eye . . ." (v. 42b). But what this means isn't all that clear at first.
 - B. My fear is that some of us will hear that and think: "Okay, so before I ever attempt to help another person with their sin, I have to be free of all sin myself. I've just got to get perfect and then I can speak." And so we never speak.
 - 1. But that's not what Jesus means here. Quite the opposite in fact. Taking the log out of your eye doesn't mean getting perfect. It means finally admitting to yourself and the world that you aren't!
 - a. That's the point of Jesus' enigmatic words to the Pharisees in John 9:41: "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." The moment you are willing to admit you've been blind, you are starting to see. But so long as you say, "I see", you go on in your blindness.

The Cross of Christ

- A. The best way that I know to get to such a place of humble sight is to let the cross of Christ have its full way with us.
 - 1. You see, the cross of Christ declares two all-important truths to me at one and the same time (to put it in the fashion of Tim Keller):
 - a. On the one hand, it says that I am far more sinful and depraved than I ever dared fear—for Christ had to die to redeem me. But, on the other hand, it says that I am far more loved and accepted than I ever dared dream—for Christ chose to die to redeem me.
 - i. Let me sit on each side of this with you for a moment.

- B. On the one hand, there really is no bigger blow God could give to the ego of man than the cross of Christ.
 - 1. Jesus is God's only beloved Son, begotten from all eternity, the apple of His eye. And yet, in those moments on the cross, when my stuff, when who I am is being imputed to the Son, the Father's delight quickly turns to rage. All hell breaks loose, quite literally upon Jesus.
 - a. He is taking from God what I myself deserve. The blood, the nails, the screams, they speak to how wretched I am in and of myself.
 - i. And that is the point we must not run from, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us. We must linger there in the dark shadow of the cross and let it teach us. I am far more sinful and depraved than I ever dared fear.
- C. But, on the other hand, there really is no greater expression of love that God could give to sinful man than the cross of Christ.
 - 1. For though I deserve the fires of hell, at the cross He opens to me the gates of heaven. In Christ, I get to be the apple of the Father's eye. He rejoices over me with loud singing ([Zeph 3:17](#)). I'm forgiven. I'm counted righteous. I'm being put back together. I can finally see!

Seeing Rightly

- A. And so here's the upshot of all of this: When once I've let the cross of Christ have its full way with me, I see myself, God, you, the facts of life all differently, rightly.
- B. With regard to ourselves, we're no longer scared to take off that mask and look into the mirror. For we do so in the light of the cross. O sure, we can see our blemishes, our sicknesses, our sinfulness, and yet we know that it's not over. We are still cared for. God is not done.
 - 1. And that radically energizes our worship and our love. We can become the most humble people in all the world, without becoming deflated or depressed.
 - a. We are both humbled and hopeful, lowered and lifted, broken down and built up—at the same time, in Jesus!
- C. With regard to others, I no longer have to condemn you to justify myself. Where there once was only judgmentalism and hypercriticism, where I once took pleasure in pointing out wrong, now there is humility and love and honest concern for the well-being of one another.
 - 1. You are no longer a prop for my ego, you are a person for me to come under and care for.
 - a. I can see you in the light of the cross. Are you a sinner? Yes, far worse than you know. But is there hope and help for you? O brother/sister, God has only just begun His work in us through Christ!

- D. When we remove the beam in our eye by way of the cross, we stop hurting one another and start actually helping! We can speak the truth in love.