



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

The scripture this week is particularly difficult to wrestle with because almost no one thinks it is talking about them. On one end of the spectrum, there are those of us who read “Do not judge”, and fail to engage in critical moral evaluation. We see a license to dodge difficult questions of how one ought to act in view of God’s coming kingdom. We witness those throwing stones, and in our disgust of such people we overreact so as not to be like them. We fail to acknowledge that there are wrong ways to pursue God’s will in the world.

On the other end are those of us who read “Do not judge”, and write this off as an extreme metaphor. We see other passages where Jesus clearly calls out sinners, and accept that as our own personal calling. We zealously condemn those we see as unrighteous, and we do it claiming it’s for their own good. We miss opportunities to build relationships with the outsider and with the neglected because we are too busy casting them aside.

In all of these cases, we let our perception of others cloud our own relationship with God. So rarely do we let this passage be a critique of our own moral compass, and instead we use it to decry the lack of righteousness we perceive in others. In complete irony, we use our Lord’s insistence that we turn inward as an excuse to look outward.

In the song for the week, the Sour Kangaroo openly proclaims to Horton, “*Maybe I’m nasty, maybe I’m cruel, But you’re the biggest blame fool*”. Even though she’s aware of her own potential failings, she’s caught up on Horton’s. Her bias against Horton blinds her to his prophetic message, “*I know there’s a person down there*”.

Robin Levins, First Church member

Consider the Source Matthew 7:1-5

A Family Affair

Do you ever find yourself thinking you could do a better cart-wheel than your friend or that your brother’s hat doesn’t match his shirt? Read Matthew 7:1-5 together.

We are in charge of our own actions and appearances, not other’s behaviors. Jesus taught that we shouldn’t judge others and nobody is perfect. In the Dr. Seuss book, *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*, there are numerous characters, each unique and different. It would be a very boring book if all the creatures looked and acted the same.

Like the characters in the Dr. Seuss book, no two people are alike in interests, talents, or how they look and act. God gave each person unique skills, ideas, and appearances. Differences should be celebrated, not judged. What are some differences between people that can be celebrated? What is unique about you?

As a family, work together to make a name poem for each family member. Starting at the top of a piece of paper, write a name down the side of the paper. Next to each letter of the name, write a describing word for that person. Is your family member joyful? Energetic? Kind? Celebrate the wonderful things about each person.

Dear Lord, Help us rejoice in our differences by building each other up and not judging one another. Amen.

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

Monday: Matthew 6:14-15

This week’s passage is situated in the larger context of Matthew. Here, we see a parallel construction to 7:1-2. Forgive and you will be forgiven; do not forgive and you will not be forgiven.

- These verses immediately follow the Lord’s Prayer. What does the Lord’s Prayer say about forgiveness?
- The author suggests forgiveness is the opposite of judgment. What, then, does that mean for our warning against judging?

Tuesday: Matthew 7:1-2

We are cautioned against judgment. Yet wrapped up in this is a sense of God’s fairness - “the measure you give will be the measure you get”. We noted yesterday that Jesus juxtaposes judging with forgiving. Verse 2 makes it clear that judging isn’t a passive action, but something one actively does (and receives).

- What are ways you’ve seen other people judge?
- What are ways that you yourself have judged others?

Wednesday: Matthew 7:3-5

Psychologists have noted something called “fundamental attribution error”. It suggests that when we see something wrong about how someone else acts, we presume it’s because that’s the sort of person they are (a bad person does bad things). Conversely, when we recognize ourselves to have fallen short of a goal, we blame it on external factors around us causing that, rather than being the sort of person who would act wrongly.

- How does this passage recognize this tendency of human experience?
- Note that we still do have a responsibility to aid one another who have specks in their eyes. How does Jesus say we go about doing that?
- Can we ever be sure we have the log out of our own eye?

Thursday: Matthew 7:6

“Casting pearls before swine” is an old saying Jesus is invoking, and it’s no accident that it’s placed here immediately after Jesus discusses how we concern ourselves in the sins of others.

- Here, the “swine” are a crude stand-in for unbelievers who are not headed for the Kingdom of God. For one who doesn’t believe in Jesus Christ, how compelling are Jesus’s commands going to be?
- Jesus clearly calls us to make disciples of all nations. (Compare Matthew 28:18-20.) What, then, should our approach be toward those who don’t believe?

Friday: Matthew 18:15-22

Jesus does talk about how to handle when a fellow Christian sins against you.

- Where is the judgment in this passage?
- Where is the forgiveness in this passage?
- What parallels does 18:18 have with 6:14-15 and 7:1-2?
- “[I]f the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.” How does Jesus want us to treat people who are not part of the church?