

Part 20: Humble Helpers

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What do you think is the most memorized verse in the Bible? Perhaps the powerful simplicity of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Or if you grew up in church maybe you had the distinct joy of adding John 11:35 to your belt due to its brevity: "Jesus wept." Or maybe on a global level one might even consider a verse we looked at last week--the golden rule: "As you would wish others to do to you, do so to them."

But I would like to propose that today we find the world's most memorized verse. It is plastered upon signs at protests, placed in living room windows, daily brandished on social media, and perhaps even quoted back to you this past week. What is the verse that has such universal appeal? The very verse that begins our passage today: "Judge not, and you will not be judged."

If there's one thing your nominally Christian co-worker and your non-Christian neighbor know about your Bible it's that it says you shouldn't judge. If there's one thing our post-Christian culture has come to know about Christians is that they are often accused of being judgmental and hypocritical.

Now before we get too far into our passage today, it is important to remind ourselves that we are in the middle of Jesus' handbook of discipleship. He is giving his disciples a locker-room speech before they take to the field of ministry and we should be mindful of what else Jesus said about the perception of the Christian in public.

Consider, **Luke 6:22**. Peter who listened to this very message reminded his own churches in **1 Peter 4:3-4**.

So make no mistake, Christians will always be found as odd and out of place to the watching world. This is because of our dual citizenship. Believers live, interact, and follow Jesus in a world which is passing away while at the same time belonging to an eternal Kingdom which is yet to come.

Jesus' message today is not that his disciples should always and only be accepted by the world. To prioritize friendship with the world over friendship with Jesus is to become an enemy of Jesus.

But what Jesus is saying is that when we are hated, maligned, mocked and given all sorts of categorical badges—be sure it is for the right reasons and not the wrong reasons. The cross of Jesus is offensive, but our character ought not to be.

So as we walk through a world of issues, conflict, sin and dangers how can we avoid harm for the wrong reasons? When it comes to Christians and an unhelpful spirit of hypocrisy and judgment Jesus offers two questions to us today: "Why is it so?" and "How can it be?"

If you've experienced or been frustrated with a spirit of gospel-void criticism in the church, I do pray today that this text will help you understand why sin should be dealt with, but also how sin should be dealt with.

But the primary audience of this message today is for believers. This is Jesus' lecture on how to avoid discipleship malpractice. It won't spare you from opposition with the world, but it just might save you from the folly of anti-gospel hypocrisy. It guides our mouths and hands which seek to care by informing and highlighting our own hearts first and foremost.

Our big picture today is that **Gospel-shaped encounters with others require a personal experience with humbling mercy.**

We will see three fruits of this humbling mercy which would define Christians in this text. First we will see Gospel-shaped interactions are **Ruled by Grace** (vs. 37-38), as well as **Led by Humility** (39-42), and lastly **Filled with Goodness** (43-45).

Let's begin to assess our own hearts by reading the first portion of our passage today: **Luke 6:37-38.**

Because of the nature of Jesus' teaching here I want to begin again with a brief preface on the text. Jesus is not saying here that there is no need for judgment or condemnation. In fact Jesus is here warning us about these issues because there are two simultaneous truths that complicate matters. ***The first is that we by nature, Christian, Hindu or atheist, are judgmental.*** This is not a Christian problem it is a human one.

Take for example chain of fitness gyms which market themselves as "a judgement free zone." It's a place where you can come and work-out and not be belittled, thought-less of or condemned. However in this very gym is also a policy called, "The Lunk Alert," they give out warnings to people who are "Lunking" which is described as one who "grunts, drops weights or judges." And they give an example which says this: "Rick is slamming his weights, wearing a body building tank top, and drinking out of a gallon water jug...what a lunk."

It seems to me that Rick has just found himself judged in a judgement free zone. Their own description only includes one of their listed taboos, slamming weights, but the assumption is this: I can hear Rick drop his weights, I can see Rick's apparel and accessories, and I can therefore judge that Rick is a judgmental lunk.

In fact the claim that Christians are judgmental is in fact a judgement. And it's often a judgment made by someone who due to a handful of negative experiences with a few individuals are then able to categorically brand and label the nearly 2.5 billion believers in this world as "judgmental."

Everyone judges because it is innate to us. But this is the second point of preface. Judgement is innate to us because ***There are things in this world we must judge for safety and for joy.***

We need to judge and we need to condemn because there are things which are out of place in this world on account of sin. It's right for you to judge the quality of the gas-station sushi you were just handed. It's right to condemn the depravity and wickedness of school shootings. A world without judgement and condemnation is not a safe world, it is a world of unchecked danger and drastic disorientation.

One of the greatest sports movies ever made is *Remember the Titans* which chronicles the challenges of integrating a black school and a white school through the lens of a football team. This movie would be far less endearing if when the coach showed up that first day of practice and saw the segregated

huddles he said, "There's nothing wrong here." He knew there was something wrong, he rightly and wisely discerned the evil which was at play in the hearts of the coaches and players.

It would also have been unfitting if Coach Boone saw the evil, but chose to do nothing on account of it. What makes the film so good is the evil was seen as just that, but the posture taken to address it was powerful. Jesus is trying to help naturally judgmental people rightly interact with broken people and real issues in a way that is genuinely helpful.

How does he seek to do that? By showing a distinctly Christian way forward. This is our first point today, in a world of judgment and condemnation believers are **Ruled by Grace**.

Remember these commands to not judge and not condemn come immediately following what we saw last week: **Luke 6:35-36**.

We can only be ruled by grace when we first understand that we are ruled by God. The Most High, our heavenly father acknowledges and deals with evil because he is God and we are not.

Jesus isn't saying that we shouldn't judge or condemn what's evil. In fact in 1 Corinthians Paul specifically says that it is the business of believers to judge those who claim to be believers, to make sure their lives match up with their doctrine. It is Jesus himself in Matthew 18 who says the whole church is to make a judgement regarding the heart of the believer living in unrepentant sin.

But while Christians deal with sin through the practices and methods Jesus himself provides, while we are to call sin sin and evil evil, we are to realize that we are never the ultimate judge and jury. God himself is.

When Jesus combines the idea of judgment with condemnation we know he's not merely talking about discerning, he's talking about the rendering of a final verdict. When a judge rules with a condemnation the time for arguments, pleasantries, and innocence have ended. Jesus is warning us of issuing a condemnation of judgment on someone which seemingly allows us to write them off forever.

You see even when Jesus calls the church in issues of church discipline to judge and put out an unrepentant believer, we are reminded that this judgement is not final. The church renders judgement in hope that this judgment would change, that the sinning sheep would come back, that the offender would be restored.

God's judgement is the only final judgment. God's condemnation is the only final condemnation. There is a judgment and there is a condemnation for sin and evil which has no hope of change, and that is God's final judgment of any who stand apart from Jesus Christ.

But as we interact with people we do not have the privilege of saying: "This is what you get, and you will get nothing else."

The joy of trusting that God is the one who will be the final and perfect judge is that we have the privilege of acknowledging what is sinful while at the same time constantly extending grace.

The challenge of this text is that it assumes that we have judged things to be wrong. It assumes we have encountered condemnable and shameful actions but then it calls you to forgive them anyway. Why? Because you are not God, and God forgives and gave grace to you.

Consider James' word in **James 4:4-6**. Look at this interaction between Jesus and Peter in **Matthew 18:21-22**.

If God had a nickel every time you sinned against him, every time it would have been right for him to condemn you to a just punishment of death on the spot, the world couldn't contain the debt. But he gives grace in Jesus Christ. God was long suffering with sinners in order to lead them to repentance, so we might be as well.

What does this look like? Look at the text. It looks like forgiving people even when they don't deserve it, and it looks like giving them the benefit of the doubt even when it seems they've lost it. Now this doesn't mean we are foolish or dangerous in any of it. But it does challenge our pride a bit doesn't it?

We might feel like a doormat, but that's ok. You aren't God. Your ability to give grace to someone doesn't ignore the sin and no one by obeying Jesus causes more sin to flourish. You might feel like a doormat, but to be the doormat into the Kingdom of God is the most useful role a Christian can fill.

This grace is not only of benefit to others, but it's of benefit to us. Jesus makes it clear that if you are diligent in extending grace to others, grace generally comes back in your own failings. He uses this agricultural term: pressed down, shaken together, running over, good measure will be poured into your lap.

Have you ever been to Sweet Peaks when you have a generous scooper? They take the cone and they mash that ice cream down into it, they pack it tight, it runs over with goodness on top. This kind of interaction is something Jesus says you should prepare yourselves for if we live this way. Isn't that wild?

We often want to qualify this, but Jesus wants us to just be motivated by it. So let's give it a go.

Because we are ruled by God, we are free to be ruled by grace when we encounter broken people in this broken world.

But secondly, we are also **Led by Humility**. Read with me **Luke 6:39-42**.

Jesus open with a little parable about a blind man leading a blind man, and then talks to us about disciples and teachers.

Both of these anecdotes imply that we should be helping others grow—there should be leadership, there should be teaching, there should be growth and there should be help. But one thing that makes help unhelpful is the blindness of arrogance and hypocrisy.

We see a glimpse into what this sort of blindness looks like when we examine the interaction Jesus just had with the Pharisees earlier in this chapter.

The Pharisees wanted to get Jesus for breaking the law of the Sabbath so they set a trap with a man with a withered hand to see if he would heal him. And notice the ironic blindness Luke shows us: **Luke 6:9-11**.

The Pharisees were so dedicated to finding the speck in Jesus' eye that they were willing to get mad at him for healing on the Sabbath. But what did the Pharisees do? They went away in fury and planned murder on the Sabbath!

That's some intense blindness, and Jesus is saying here that this sort of hypocrisy should not be in the Lord's church!

Now I want to point out two important observations here. First we see that Jesus assumes that a Christian brother would approach a Christian brother about his sin, and secondly we see that the sin is ultimately addressed. After everything Jesus talks about, he says then go take out the speck in your brother's eye.

In the parable Jesus uses, we see the road to glory has pits, ditches and dangers. There will be times where someone falls, or where we should grab hold of the person next to us and say, "I don't think we should walk over there!" Only the arrogant assume a life of following Jesus is a life where the road is only smooth and we will never need help from others.

Because of that Jesus isn't saying, "Don't help others avoid danger!" Instead he's saying, "Don't be blind about your own danger."

An honest man can point out faults in someone else. But a humble man learns to see the bigger picture. The greatest picture of reality is one that includes yourself as well.

Look at what the author of Hebrews says in **Hebrews 3:12-13**.

What leads us to falling away? The deceitfulness of sin, a heart which fails to believe that you are prone to failure as well.

When we move towards others, real issues in others, we first need to first humbly examine our own hearts. Nothing kills superiority like even the smallest bit of introspection.

You want to know the best thing about parenting? It's the worst. Kid's show you that your eye is a veritable lumber mill and they love running around with a can of spray paint letting you know where the trees are. I can't tell you how many times I've heard my kids say something to each other in a harsh tone only to have me chastise them in the same tone.

I'm raising a boy with three younger sisters and they are at an age of mutual incompatibility. I've had to get used to asking a very scary and real question while I'm disciplining him and that is: "Do you ever see dad treat women like that?" Nothing equalizes the discipline corner like that question!

One pastor in the early church put it this way: "when the sight of another's weakness is displeasing to you, recall what you are like so that the spirit can temper itself in the zeal of correction in order that it should also fear what it corrects."

What is often true in my life is that the sins I find distasteful in others are often, upon further examination, merely copyright infringement upon my own sins. When we encounter that we don't say:

“Well I guess he gets a pass.” But it might look like sitting down with that brother or sister and saying, “I think we’ve got a shared problem here, how might we help each other?”

But there are often times where we are most inflamed at sins in others that we ourselves don’t struggle with. Let us then examine our hearts for a spirit of condescension, arrogance or superiority which might influence our words and our care.

Jesus is the great high priest who is able to sympathize with us but was himself without sin. Let us never forget the distinction between the great high priest, and us friendly priests who share in the same empathy of sinful trials with our brothers and sisters.

Gregory the Great, writing to married couples in the sixth century said this: **"The married should be advised, then, that they not worry themselves so much about what they must endure from their spouse but consider what their spouse must endure on account of them. For if one really considers what must be endured on his account, it is all the easier to bear the things of others."**

So how might we examine the plank in our own eyes? I want to give us three quick ways to do this for the purpose of better helping those around us. First, pray. Ask God to help you see what you yourself cannot. Second, examine. Hold up God's word to your heart and examine what lines up and what is out of place. Open up passages like 2 Peter 1, Ephesians 6, 1 Corinthians 13 and be honest with what you see and what you don't. And lastly, ask. Ask people in your community group, your Bible study, or your roommates what they see in your heart, humbly knowing that our own perception of ourselves is often limited.

This kind of examination doesn’t mean that if you find sin in your heart you can’t care for people. It simply means that you need to be aware of it and deal with it. If God didn’t want sinful people caring for sinful people he wouldn’t have given us the church! Jesus is the only sinless shepherd, he’s the only one who can fulfill that role. We should also be mindful that Jesus eases our anxiety here doesn’t he. He assumes that others will see the speck easier than we will, but he says you ought to be able to see the log.

If we examine our hearts and don’t find something immediately out of place, that’s great. Their might be a speck, but that’s what others are here for. Instead Jesus wants you to be keenly aware of what might be glaringly obvious—humbly check the log and graciously move towards the speck.

We are to be ruled by grace, led by humility, and lastly we are to be **Filled with Goodness**.

Read with me **Luke 6:43-45**.

So here first of all we see the problem of sin. It's not a behavior problem. It's a being problem. This is why when we are sharing the gospel with non-believers we aren't calling them to stop swearing or watching rated R movies. No thorn bush becomes a fig tree by taping figs to the leaves, and no bramble bush becomes a grape vine by being trimmed and tied to a trellis.

When it comes to what we produce we don't need new fruit, we need new roots. Jesus then drops the metaphor and says, "I'm not talking about botany, I'm talking about you!" The good person produces good and the evil person produces evil and what you are is what you leak!

This is great news for those of us who are good people. Good people will treat other people goodly. Good people will produce good and glorious fruit. Good people will enjoy good.

The problem is, there are no good people. Remember how Jesus referred to his adopted brothers and sisters right before this in Luke 6:35? He called all of us ungrateful and evil. In the equation of fruit, we are bad at the root. All of us.

But what is Jesus assuming here? What's the only thing that can change our present condition? Look back at **Luke 6:35-36**.

What changes our root is an experience with the mercy of God the Father through Jesus Christ. We who once belonged to nothing are made sons of the Most High. How? Through Jesus Christ: **2 Corinthians 5:17**. Look at what Paul says in **Romans 7:21-8:1**.

What is the point? The point is that we were the bad trees, with bad fruits. We were the blind guides and the arrogant teachers. We were those who sat under just judgement, worthy of all our condemnation and yet Jesus delivered us from all of that.

Jesus was condemned for us so that though we encounter the lingering effects of sin we might preach to ourselves the glorious doctrine of justification—that though may remain in the believer it no longer reigns in the believer. Jesus reigns. Jesus has changed my root, and now I grow new fruit. Season by season, year by year the fruit gets sweeter and sweeter.

Why does Jesus include this portion here? Because look at where he ends **Luke 6:45**.

Out of the treasure of a good person's heart, of the abundance of his heart, his mouth speaks. Remember the last time we heard speaking in this text? Vs. 42. How can you say to your brother, "Let me get that?" while at the same time you are arrogant of your own sin?

Jesus point is bit more clear now isn't it? If what occupies your heart is the gospel of redeeming grace which saved a wretch like you, then what we leak is also grace. Grace that deals with sin, yes for sure, but grace also that looks like grace—good fruit which draws from the goodness of Jesus' root.

The British pastor J.C. Ryle said, "Wherever Christ is best known and obeyed, there will always be found the most real joy and peace." I'd like to edit that in light of Jesus' words here and say, "Wherever Christ is best known and treasured, there will always be found the most real joy and peace."

On one hand we fear judges. But on the other don't we love them? Isn't that why we watch food challenges, or singing competitions? We love the joy of a judge who stands up and says: "Incredible."

More than that, it is the sound declaration of a judgment which brings us peace. If there is no measure for our standing with God, if our verdict on judgment day is left to undefined circumstances, we are fearful, anxious and doomed. But we know the measure—we know the standard. We will be measured, we will be judged based off our encounter with the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Jesus' work is so profound that God looks at his redeemed one day and says, "Incredible"! This should cause us to treasure the measure of grace. No one who treasures and enjoys the grace of Jesus should fail to give it. No one filled to the brim, pressed down, shaken together and running over with goodness, should fail to speak with words season with the same.