

Sunday, October 11, 2009

**Matthew 7.1-5
Let Me Walk a Mile in Your Shoes
SWCOB 10.11.09**

There is an old, old story about two neighbors,
A baker and a farmer.

The baker began to get suspicious of the farmer,
He didn't think he was getting his money's worth,
When he bought a pound of butter.

He weighed the farmer's butter on several occasions,
And finally had him arrested for fraud.

The judge asked the farmer at the trial,
"I presume you have scales?"

"Yes, of course, your Honor," the farmer replied.

"And weights?" the judge asked.

"No," replied the farmer.
"I don't have a set of weights."

"Then how do you weigh the butter you sell to your neighbor?"
The judge asked.

"That's easy," the farmer said,
"When the baker began to buy butter from me,
I decided to buy my bread from him."

"I've been using his one-pound loaves,
To balance my scales."

"If the weight of the butter is wrong,
Than the weight of the bread is wrong too."
(Dr. William Mitchell, Building Strong Families)

~~

**And with the measure you use,
It will be measured to you (Mt. 7.2).**

~~

Matthew Henry wrote,
"If we presume to judge others,
We may expect to be ourselves judged."

~~

In today's passage,
Jesus warns us to be careful when criticizing others,

Because it probably will come back at us.

How often we criticize without knowing the full story.
How often we criticize w/out fully understanding the situation.

How often we criticize,
When we should be walking a mile in their shoes.

How often are we critical of someone,
When deep down inside,
The behavior we're criticizing is our very own.

Too often.

As in the baker and the farmer,
How is it that we are often the cheater,
Who gets cheated?

Why is it that we never think our neighbor measures up,
When, really, we are afraid to measure ourselves?

One commentator made the statement that,
Life has a way of giving back to us,
What we give it.

If we frown at life,
It frowns at us.

If we pour poisonous criticisms out,
Poisonous criticisms are poured back at us.

Life has a way of dishing back,
What we dish out.

The Life Application Bible makes the comment,
"The traits that bother us in others,
Are often the habits we dislike in ourselves.

If you are ready to criticize someone,
Check to see if you deserve the same criticism,
Judge yourself first . . ."

~~

We are told here by Jesus not to judge others.

This is not the only time,
The Bible tells us not to judge.

In Romans 14.10, Paul tells his listeners,

**You, then, why do you judge your brother?
Or why do you look down on your brother?**

For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

In James 4.11-12, James says,

**Brothers, do not slander one another,
Anyone who speaks against his brother,
Or judges him speaks against the law and judges it.**

**When you judge the law,
You are not keeping it,
But sitting in judgment on it.**

**There is only one Lawgiver and Judge,
The one who is able to save and destroy.
But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?**

~~

Jesus says that we are not to be critical of one another,
Until we look deeply into our own behavior.

And let's admit there are times when we do see,
The speck in our neighbor's eye,
With total disregard for the log sticking out of our own eye.

We sit and look at how people dress,
Or how they act,
And we immediately place judgment on them.

We see that someone in the food-line take out food-stamps,
And we immediately place judgment on them.

We see the color of their skin,
And we immediately place judgment on them.

We see their piercings, tattoos
And pants that have the crotch dragging the floor,
And we immediately place judgment on them.

We are so quick to judge!

~~

Sometimes this passage is used in the argument,
That what I say or what I do,
Is no one's business but my own.

Our society has come from a philosophy that says,
"I'm okay, you're okay,"
To a society with the philosophy that has become twisted and says,

“Don’t try and tell me what I’m doing is wrong,
And I won’t tell you that what you’re doing is wrong.”

That is misinterpreting this passage.

The fact is we make judgment calls all the time.

When we hire someone,
When we marry someone,
When we raise our kids,

We have to make judgment calls.

“Do not judge,”
Should not be taken as a commandment,
Against all judging.

This passage is speaking out against,
Criticizing others without critically looking at our own behavior.

~~

In Galatians, Paul tells the church,
**If someone is caught in a sin,
You who are spiritual,
Should restore him gently.**

The church can and should help guide and direct,
Our paths into more Christ-like living,
In a gentle and humble manner.

What Jesus is saying is that,
We need to examine ourselves,
Before we scrutinize others.

If what we condemn in someone else,
Is found in ourselves,
Then we are no more than hypocrites.

However if we recognize our own shortcomings,
We will be a bit more understanding of others’ shortcomings.

A 10th Century Monk, Abbot Moses, puts it this way,
“They who are conscious of their own sins,
Have no eyes for the sins of their neighbors.”
Meaning we are a whole lot more understanding and forgiving,
Of others’ sins when we recognize we have sins, too.

~~

A husband highly, critical of his wife,
Goes to see the family doctor:

“I know my wife is deaf.
She never hears me the first time I say something.

In fact, I often have to repeat myself,
Over and over again.”

“Well,” the doctor replies,
“Go home tonight, stand about 15 feet from her,
And say something.”

If she doesn’t reply, move about five feet closer,
And say it again.

Keep doing this so we can get an idea,
Of the severity of her deafness.”

Sure enough, the husband goes home,
And he does exactly as he is instructed.

He stands about 15 feet from his wife,
Who is standing in the kitchen,
Chopping some vegetables.

“Honey, what’s for dinner?”

He gets no response, so he moves five feet closer and asks again,
“Honey, what’s for dinner?”

No reply,

He moves five feet closer, and still gets no reply.
He gets fed up and moves in right behind her
—about an inch away from her ear,
And asks one more time.

“Honey, what’s for dinner?”

She replies,
“For the fourth time, vegetable soup!”

~~

Are we willing to admit that it is we who are the deaf ones?
Are we willing to scrutinize our own behavior?

Or do we have some kind of need to criticize others?
Maybe because we are found lacking in our own character.

Jesus tells us to be careful to criticize.

Jesus tells us we must never place judgment on anyone,

Without first walking a mile in their shoes.

Steve Martin says,
“Before you criticize a man,
Walk a mile in his shoes.

That way when you do criticize him,
You are a mile away and have his shoes.”

~~

In all seriousness,
There is nothing more hurtful,
Or more destructive,
Than to place judgment harshly.

Walk a mile in another’s shoes,
Better yet,
Carry your brother burdens in your arms for a mile.

~~

A grocery store check-out clerk,
Once wrote to columnist Ann Landers.

She complained that she had seen people buy “luxury” items
—like birthday cakes—
—and bags of shrimp—
With their food stamps.

The writer went on to say,
That she thought all people on welfare
Were lazy and wasteful,
And manipulated the system.

A few weeks later Lander’s column,
Was devoted entirely to people,
Who had responded to the grocery store clerk.

One woman wrote,
“I didn’t buy a cake,
But I did buy a big bag of shrimp with food stamps.

So? My husband had been working at a plant,
For fifteen years when it shut down.

The shrimp casserole I made was
For our wedding anniversary,
And we had it for leftovers for three days.

Perhaps the grocery clerk who criticized that woman,
Would have taken a different view,

Had she walked a mile in her shoes.”

Another woman wrote,

“I’m the woman who bought the \$17 birthday cake.
And paid for it with food stamps.

I thought the check-out woman
Would burn a hole through me with her eyes.

What she didn’t know is the cake
Was for my little girl’s birthday.

We think it might be her last,
She has bone cancer.

And we are told she has less than three months to live.

~~

Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

**For in the same way you judge others,
You will be judged. . . .**

~~

Jesus warns us to be careful how we view our neighbors.

He reminds us that before we try to take the speck,
Out of our neighbor’s eye,

We must first remove the plank in our own eye.

Before we find fault in how our neighbors measure up,
Let us first find how we measure up.

Thomas a Kempis writes,

“Be not angry that you cannot make others as you want them to be,
Since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.”

Let’s make it a practice, brothers and sisters
That before we criticize anyone,
Let’s first walk a mile in their shoes.

Maybe then we can know of the burdens they carry.
And only then can we reach out in true compassion and empathy,
To a world bent on self-destruction.

This is what Jesus would have us do!