

Walking Through Luke Resurrection Overflow

Luke 6:37-42

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37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

39 He also told them a parable: “Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. 41 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 42 Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye. (Luke 6:37-42, NRSV)

When you are driving a bus full of High School students to a retreat, it is generally not a good idea to pick up scraggly-looking hitch-hikers. But, this

is what one youth pastor did years ago. It wasn’t me by the way. On the on-ramp to the highway they were taking to camp was a man with a card-board sign with the name of a town along their route. So they offered him a ride. It had obviously been a while since this man had bathed, or used a razor, or had a change of clothes, and his two backpacks were overflowing with dirty rags. He was content to keep to himself. And the students very visibly made room for him to sit. A lot of room. As much as possible. On the plus side, it was a much quieter ride to camp for the driver than usual. No one said a word to the stranger, and even a few snickers could be heard along the way. Finally, he was let out in a small town. He simply thanked everyone, and on they went.

That night all the students gathered for worship, and the speaker got up, prayed, and the talk was on Luke 6:37. Do not judge. He asked the students if they had encountered anyone in the last week that they had judged based on their looks. Eventually, one of them mentioned the man they just met on the bus. The speaker asked her to describe how he was dressed. When she mentioned his hat, he pulled one out, put one on, and said, “You mean a hat like this?” And this continued with a description of his coat, his shoes, putting those on as well, and he asked, “Did he have a hole in the jeans like mine?” Those who hadn’t caught on yet finally did. Then he said, “I think the remains of my beard may have clogged the sink.” Definitely an experience on which to hang the rest of the weekend talks about judging others.

This past calendar year, we have been walking through Jesus' life and ministry in the book of Luke. Last week we took a break for Easter. And I'm so grateful. Not only was it a fantastic celebration, but the message of the cross and the empty tomb make so much more sense out of the passage we are looking at here. One of the things that can be confusing is that this passage is made up of at least three saying of Jesus that were spoken in totally different contexts to different people. In Matthew they are spread out in chapters 7, 10, and 15. But Luke is nothing if not organized and intentional. There is always a reason for Luke. Before Easter, and directly preceding these verses, we looked at Jesus' call to *love our enemies*. This is difficult enough, but now he tells us not to judge. Both of these passages are "repacking" verses.

We often approach scripture the way we prepare for a trip. Imagine you have a half-packed suitcase with things that you need for your trip. But then you discover something else you'd like to take. You realize—you don't have room for everything. Now you have to make a decision. Either you leave it behind, or you take something OUT of your suitcase to make room. The heading of this passage in many translations is simply: Do not Judge. It is familiar enough, and we've said it enough to others that we simply say, "Right, don't judge, don't judge a book by its cover, yeah I got that." We shut our Christian suitcases and off we go. But this is one of those passages that will probably require us to take something out to make room for it. The negative (not judging others) requires a few positives

that will require change on our part, in our attitudes, in our practice, maybe even those we consider friends.

The title, "Do Not Judge" is not particularly helpful for this reason. It's too short, and seemingly too easy. Besides which, judging is something we are constantly doing, and may not be an altogether bad thing. Where would we be without competition shows that include four celebrity judges telling contestants when they are fantastic, and when they are downright awful? There is something so satisfying and enticing about watching those shows. We want to judge. We want the truth to be known. Jesus is not telling us not to judge between right and wrong, good and bad decisions. He's constantly teaching us to choose or to judge—rocky foundation or sandy foundation, sowing seeds on good soil or bad soil, judging between cities of peace or not—wipe off the dust in those cities and move along. The title is misleading, because Jesus isn't discouraging us from making decisions or "judging," but he's saying when you make those judgements, judge in a new way. Unpack your suitcase, and get ready for a whole new way of looking at people.

Malcolm Gladwell wrote a book called *Blink-the Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. It's actually a pretty fascinating study of all of the thinking that goes on *in the blink of an eye*. He makes the case that our blink of an eye first impressions on things often are the most accurate. He talks of a doctor John Glottman. After only one hour of talking with a couple, he could predict with 95% accuracy if they would be

married in 15 years. There were distinctive “signatures” and one particular “dominant signature” that predicted the outcome. The point is that if you could sift through the situation and all that is irrelevant and zero in on what really matters, then you could be incredibly accurate. And Gladwell suggests that our unconscious actually does this really well, sometimes better than we can do through more deliberate ways of thinking things through.¹

Our snap judgements or first impressions can either help or hinder our ability to judge well. God has designed us to judge. And perhaps God has even designed us to judge compassionately and with great mercy already. But we may have loaded our suitcase with some things that need to be unlearned so that we can judge like God judges. If we really are to *sift through all that is irrelevant*, what is that one thing that really matters that we need to zero in on? We don’t have to buy another book to tell us that. It’s all right here in this passage, but we have to connect it to the other passages around it, and we have to connect it the experience of the Resurrection that we are living in the shadow of—or I should say the glorious light of—right now.

Gladwell said, “Our power of thin-slicing and snap judgment are extraordinary. But even the giant computer in our unconscious needs a moment to do its work.” This morning, I would suggest that the *moment* is the moment in which we fully understand the power of the Resurrection in our own lives. When we do, that’s the

moment in which the way we judge others will be transformed. We will take something out of our suitcase and replace it with a new way of looking at people—the way Jesus looked at people.

Yesterday, during a memorial service, we sang Amazing Grace, so well done, so appropriate. And we get to sing it again today if you stick around for the 11:00 service. Verse 2 says, “Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace and my fears relieved.” We typically think of fear as a bad thing. Right? But fear turns us away from a dark alley that doesn’t seem safe, fear makes us keep our distance from a grizzly bear, fear keeps us from climbing an electric barb-wire fence. It was God’s grace that taught us to fear, and it was the same God, and same grace, that walks alongside us in that fear. It’s the same with pain. It serves a very important purpose, God-given, and it is God who heals and comforts. And it’s the same again with judgement. Grace gave us the power to make judgements woven into our created make-up, to choose quickly or slowly depending on the necessity. And its grace, once we realize how amazing it is, that transforms the *way* in which we judge.

This is what I call, “Resurrection Overflow”. The inability to contain the grace that is poured out upon us that brings us to our knees like the tax collector or brings us to tears like the woman who anointed Jesus because they knew their great need for God’s grace. These are the kinds of people that he wanted to lead the next generation of followers of Christ. No wonder he spent so much time with them. The religiously

¹ Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink*. 2005.

solid people of the day—had defined *judging* as deciding who is IN and who is OUT based on the rules and sacrifices that they had set up. In their mind, they were already IN. There would be no resurrection overflow for them. Paul prayed for the Philippians, his biggest prayer, that they would know the power of the Resurrection, God's love so high and deep and long and all of that—that they would overflow in gratitude to God.

This is where the passage led me this week. Let's take a look a little more closely so you don't think I'm just making this up.

From the beginning there is repetition that seems to point to the fact that the way we want to be judged is the way we should judge other people.

Someone once asked the question, "If God were to judge us the way we judge others, how would we fare?" That's a little bit of a scary way to think about it. Because it certainly sounds here like my eternal fate may depend on the first thoughts that go through my head about a person when they walk through the door, whether I can help it or not! "Do not judge and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven." If I think back on my dealings with people this past week, I'm in big trouble.

However. Thank you Jesus for the word, "however". God's grace is amazing. There is a literary method that makes this a little bit tricky. You have to read these three phrases in the context of

everything else happening around it. The trick is that when you do look at the context here, it flips the meaning. Read through the lens of the rest of the passage, and really the rest of the Gospel message, we might read it like this: *See, you haven't been judged? So don't judge. See, you haven't been condemned? Don't condemn. See how much you've been forgiven? Forgive.* Hopefully you'll agree as we work on this.

The whole second half of this passage that Luke has paired these with are about eye problems. First the blind people leading each other into a pit, and a man with a plank in his eye pointing out the splinter. In both of these, Jesus was being funny for sure. He was conjuring up these ridiculous images of people falling into a pit and people with wood sticking out of their eyes—this is the Lego version. They are people that do not have a full grasp of their own failures. The irony is that in order for a blind person to be able to truly see, they first have to admit their blindness. Their "sight" is the ability to see God's grace and then he can teach the next blind person to recognize their blindness. The only reason they both walk into a pit, is because they think they can see just fine on their own, thank you very much. They don't need God.

The people with wood in their eye, if they help one another to be honest about their own shortcomings...

...can help one another to be able to see as well. In between these we have a teacher and a disciple. The student becomes as qualified as the teacher when they realize their shortcomings and they

humbly accept the modeling of a teacher, who as it turns out, also has weaknesses. And the more they acknowledge that, the more effective they are as a teacher. It's interesting because in that time, the student/teacher relationship was never a classroom situation. It was a life situation. The primary method of teaching was through apprenticeship and modeling. A teacher could not simply give a lecture and go live a different way. The teacher's life *was* the lesson. So it made these analogies of the blind guides and the wood in the eye even funnier.

But the point was serious. And the challenge was direct. Jesus was saying to the Pharisees and to his followers: You know, and you even teach, that God is slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, *yet* you continue to base your religious practice on judging who is IN and who is OUT. For them, Jesus had not yet died and rose again! There was no Resurrection! And still he was teaching them that they needed to know God's mercy. If he can teach them so directly, how much softer should our own hearts be when we look at how much we have been forgiven through his sacrifice, and how we find ourselves standing next to Jesus like the woman caught in adultery with Jesus saying, "Neither do I condemn you." He could only say that because he knew Easter was on its way. For us, Easter was just last week. What are we going to unpack from our suitcase, so that we can love like Jesus?

I want to give three hooks to hang our judgmental hats on. Jesus wants us to make judgments, but he wants us to

judge the way we've been judged. Here's what I mean...

I've chosen three acronyms to redefine. It will help me remember them a bit better. But each of them are tools we can use to judge differently. **The first is TMI.** The Measure of Innocence. Not too much information, but less actually. Rather than counting the countless sins that God knows have tried to separate us from a relationship with him, because of Christ's sacrifice for us, God uses...The Measure of Innocence. (I was told this week that I don't say measure right...don't judge me)... Paul writes to the Ephesians: *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace.*² Jesus' last words: It is finished! We can no longer use a measure of guilt, we have to use a measure of innocence, and when we realize it—we respond like something overflowed into our laps—we stand up in amazement and shout...something...depending on whether it's actual water, or the water of the spirit, cleansing us, making us new, making us judge people in a similar way...with a measure of innocence, giving them the benefit of the doubt, and certainly not by their looks, or their "type", or even by what others have said about them. When we meet someone, offer them a clean slate. That will come back to bite you only every once in a very great while. And then you'll know you're doing it right.

Sometimes, someone makes us so angry or uncomfortable or irritated, that to get to that measure, we just have to count to ten. We've all heard that method.

² Ephesians 1:7

“When you get angry, take a breath, and count to ten.”

And then...

“...Throw a punch when you get to number eight, nobody expects that.”

While that’s what we all may want to do, the point of slowing down is to offer something equally unexpected and makes a greater impact, we offer them a clean slate. People expect that even less than a punch.

Number 2: OMF. This is the one right before you have to say OMG. It stands for “One More Fact.” So often, there is something I don’t know about someone, that if I did know, I wouldn’t judge them.

Maybe you’re hurt that someone didn’t return your calls and texts all weekend, then on Monday is a note to everyone: “I need all your numbers, I got a new phone, the old one broke.”

Or you’re sitting at dinner and you ask your friend why that man has been looking at you funny all night. But his hearing is particularly good as he picks up his white cane and this blind man makes his way to the door.

Or you’re on the other end, turned down for a job interview, or a loan, or a court decision, and you think, “If only they knew this about me, this would have turned out differently.” It is almost guaranteed that there is some fact in a person’s life, that if you knew it, your judgement would look more like God’s grace.

For this fact we go to the verse that immediately follows our passage: “No good tree will bear bad fruit, and no bad tree will bear good fruit.” (verse 43). What’s the determining factor here? Time. It takes time for fruit to grow. It’s more convenient to just go to Bel Air and get good fruit. It takes time, precious time often, to take time to ask a question or two, even more to get to know someone over a lifetime, and allow love to take the place of judgement. As Mother Teresa said on, “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”

Ultimately, though, there is ONE MORE FACT that works for every person, regardless anything you know about them, and it’s the ONE FACT that caused God to give everything. You and I and every person that we judge—is a child of God, created by God, in whom God delights. God doesn’t just love us ‘cause he’s God and he can. He loves us because we are his beloved.

Lastly, **number 3. BFG.** No, I am not going to refer to God as a Big Friendly Giant. BFG is Be Full of Grace. We have to offer to others the Resurrection Overflow. Let it surprise us and in turn surprise others. The most important verse in our passage may be the one that actually comes just before the one we read, verse 36. And it links together loving our enemies and the way we judge our friends. Be merciful, just as your father is merciful. *Be Merciful just as your Father is merciful.* This is the verse that spins “judge not lest you be judged” into “Judge not, because God in his incredible mercy and great sacrifice, has not judged you.”

Our call this morning is not that we *don't* judge between right and wrong, good and bad. But that the way in which we judge is ever and ever more leaning on the side of forgiveness and love, offering it to others in very real ways, ways that go against what the world would tell us to do. Have a bias, but let it be a bias toward grace and mercy. It's going to take a lot of practice. Some of us will have to take a few things out of our suitcases. Some of us may even need to dump it out and start the packing over, putting in the experience of the Resurrection and our own salvation first and begin the rebuilding process.

When you make judgements, judge like God does, start with a measure of innocence (TMI)

When someone is not like you...at all...take a minute or an hour or a lifetime to get to know one more fact about them that might change your mind (OMF).

When you are wronged, don't rush toward revenge and condemnation and "I am right!" but lean into grace and forgiveness. Be full of grace (BFG), for God has been merciful to you.

In Carey Kincaid's memorial service yesterday, Pastor Jim paid him one of the highest compliments I have ever heard when he said, "Carey never met a stranger." Because no one felt judged in any way in his presence. The first impression was always one of grace. This is the gift of someone who judges the way Christ judges. There was a man that was judged by the world, perhaps rightly so by human

standards, and placed on a cross to die. I'm not talking about Jesus. I'm talking about one of the other ones. One that was deserving of judgement because of some horrific crime. Do you remember Jesus' final judgment of this man? "Even this very day, you will be with me in paradise."

Even this very day, no matter what we've done, we are with Jesus in paradise.

And Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed.

Amen.

The Next Step

A resource for Life Groups and/or personal application

1. Take another look at Luke 6:37-42. What stands out?
2. Which verse or phrase seems to be the heart of this passage? Do any pieces of the passage seem disconnected with the rest?
3. In some Bibles, the heading (which is added later) for this passage is "Do Not Judge." How might this be a misleading place to begin thinking about Jesus' words here?
4. Can you think of times Jesus does call us to make judgements between one thing or another? How is that different than what he's saying here?
5. The verses before and after are clues to applying this passage to our lives. How might verses 36 and 43 help us to judge the way God does?

6. By pointing out failures and shortcomings in the lives of others, what is the one “plank in our own eye” that we might be missing?

7. There are three suggestions of ways to rethink how we judge others. Can you remember them? Which is most helpful? (Count to 10, One More Fact, and Offering the Resurrection Overflow of mercy)

8. Mother Teresa said, “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.” How is that either true or untrue in real life as you’ve experienced it?

Table to Table Question

A question for kids and adults to answer together



What does it mean to “judge one another”?
How is that the same or different than “love one another”?