

DAY 35

JUDGE



Matthew 7:1

"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged."

There is no shortage of "judging" in our world today. Our constantly "on" culture and constantly "noisy" culture would seem to indicate that we have to have something to say about everything. This perpetuates an idea that we are to have a particular judgment on all particular subjects.

We have a tendency to constantly judge others. We watch them from afar, casting silent (or vocal) judgment, believing we are better than others. This sort of self-righteousness plagues our cultural life because our world thrives on outrage. And I believe we live in a world of rage. The reason for this rage is it provides us with the ability to overlook our own shortcomings, not having to wrestle with our own internal failings, so we project our shortcomings onto others. Jesus is attacking this logic straight on.

He addresses our judgmental habits head-on, saying, "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" - Now, Jesus is using a humorous bit of hyperbole. He is pointing out how ridiculous it would look for someone with an entire plank sticking out of their eye to walk up seriously and tell others about a speck of dust in their eye. Clearly, it would be ridiculous.

In using this hyperbole, Jesus is reminding us that our own lives are thoroughly rot with our own failings. But note that Jesus' call is not to avoid judgment but is to ensure that we are doing the deep internal work and see how our own lives are distorted from sin. THEN, and only then, do we humbly approach the lives of others.

For so many of us, we rush to judgment of others with little regard to our own need for growth. But Jesus explains that we must first take the log out of our own eye, and then we will be able to see the speck in the other person's eye more clearly.

In many ways, this is what the season of Lent offers us all. It gives us the space to do the internal work, confronting the logs in our own eyes. We create space to look inward, to name our logs, and to call on the Lord for help in removing them. As we do this, the beautiful process of death to life takes place; we become less judgmental, more gentle, and more understanding of the struggles that others face. A deep look at our own struggles creates empathy, humility, and grace. We grow in compassion and care, recognizing that we, too, are broken, struggling individuals seeking the love and grace of God.

Daily Practice

Write down the name of a log in your eye that you often judge in the lives of those around you. Be as honest as you can. Ask God for the grace and mercy to remove this plank and to deepen your compassion for others who wrestle with it as well.

The below reflections are written by congregants & staff of CPC. All reflections are following Trevor Hudson's book Pauses for Lent and are both heavily influenced and borrowed from his work. Any quotes without attribution should be credited to him.