

THE DIFFICULT SAYINGS OF JESUS

Week 3

Introduction- John 7:1-24, 3:16-21

Read the Scripture passage above and then work through the introduction below to help guide your personal study

The sermon this weekend comes from Matthew 7:1-6, which contains one of the most quoted (and misused!) sayings of Jesus: “Judge not, lest ye be judged.” The statement has come to mean: “don’t tell me that my choices are wrong,” or “don’t put boundaries on other people’s behavior.” These, however, are over-extensions of Jesus’ teaching. Notice in Matthew 7 that Jesus expects us to reach into our brother’s eye to pull out the speck. He also assumes that there is dirt in all of our eyes, and action needs to be taken as a result!

By “judge not,” Jesus meant that we are not in the position of authority to sit in judgment on another person’s character or value. After all, who of us can live up to the standards of the law, or even our *own* set of standards. This is Jesus’ point in Matthew 7:2ff. The New Testament says that the position of ultimate judge is reserved for Jesus and not us.

John chapters 3 and 7 give us further insight into what Jesus means regarding the types of “judgment” that we should and should not use. John 7:7 says that Jesus was hated for judging the works of “the world” as evil. In verse 24, Jesus declared “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” Throughout this passage, Jesus’ listeners (and the readers of John’s gospel) were subtly invited to make a judgment about Jesus. Is he who he says he is or not? The basis for this judgment, according to Jesus, is by weighing the substance of his actions and words. Judgments about actions are necessary!

In verses 19 and 20, on the other hand, Jesus discourages his adversaries from passing the ultimate judgment on him. He might have appeared to break the law, but they should be slow to take action against him since “none of you keeps the law.” They happen to be wrong in their judgment of his actions in this case. But even if they were right, they do not have the moral authority to kill him for his supposed sins here. Thus, we should be careful about overstepping in the judgments we pronounce on other fallen people.

Using right judgment, we should continually seek to root out sin in our own lives and in the lives of others. Sin is destructive and needs to be pointed out and taught against. John 3:16-21 provides the context for Jesus’ judgments. He testifies that the works of “the world” are evil, but this is the world for which Jesus came to die because of God’s immense love for it. Similarly, when we speak out against sin we seek to do it in a way that draws people *into* God’s saving love. This mindset can help Christians make the subtle but crucial shift from speaking the truth, to speaking the truth *with grace*.

Small Group Discussion Questions

Work through the questions before you come to small group and be ready to interact with the Scripture and questions below:

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1. How did this weekend's sermon help you gain insight into the teaching of Jesus?

Read John 7:1-24

2. The issue of right and wrong judgment shows up in this passage in several places, both explicitly and implicitly. Where do you see judgments being made in these verses?

3. Why were people slow to believe in Jesus at this stage of his ministry?

4. In your own words, how would you sum up Jesus' teaching on "judgment" in this passage?

5. According to this passage, what can help you come to "right judgments"?

Read John 3:16-21

6. As John 7 reminded us, no one lives up to their own standards for right and wrong, let alone God's. How does the truth in this passage provide hope?

7. How do these verses affect the way that we speak about sin and judgment to our friends and neighbors?

8. Describe a time when someone spoke hard truth in your life with grace. How can such an approach help you when speaking about the gospel of Jesus Christ with your friends and neighbors?