

NON-JUDGMENT DAY IS COMING!

Scripture Readings: Luke 6:37-38 and Ephesians 4:2-6

Presented by Becky Ahren on 9/01/2019

Have you ever thought about how many times a day you find yourself annoyed, upset, or angry because people or things are not the way *you* think they *should* be? Think about it. In our mind, we have expectations which are sometimes improbable. Then, when they aren't met we aren't happy. Your car *should* start when you want it to. People *should* drive at the speed you want and all traffic *should* flow smoothly. The line at the store *should* move quickly and the cashier *should* be polite. People *should* wear what *you* deem appropriate. We all do this, don't we? We constantly evaluate things or people as right or wrong, good or bad. We judge people about all sorts of things – their financial status, their clothing, their weight, where they live, or the color of their skin. We form opinions about them based on their political affiliations, their IQ, their sexual preference, their age, or their religion.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us, “Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you, for God will judge you in the same way you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others.” So what leads us to pass judgment on others? I think these three things all influence our judgments; ignorance, fear and ego.

Our judgments can be influenced by ignorance because when we are unfamiliar with something we cannot be truly objective. For example, in the aftermath of the attacks on 9/11 a lot of prejudice has been exhibited against Muslims. And yet, how much do most of us truly know about the Islamic religion? It is easy to label someone else's religion wrong when we really don't understand it. The religious landscape of America has changed drastically over the past few decades and we now find ourselves living in a multi-faith society. Many of our neighbors, colleagues, classmates and now even members of Congress come from different cultures or practice a different religion than we do. In the world we live in today, I think it is essential for all of us to take the time to really learn more about the customs and religions of our neighbors. . Knowledge and understanding are the cure for prejudice. It is easier to “Love Your Neighbor” when you better understand them.

Think about how many of your current thoughts are influenced by where you happened to be born, the religious beliefs of your ancestors, the political orientation of

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your parents, your gender, or the schools you attended. Our philosophy of life, our religious beliefs, our manner of dress and our language are all influenced by what our parents and ancestors determined to be right for us. It seems that when someone thinks differently than us we feel that our views are somehow threatened. In his book, The Ten Secrets for Success and Inner Peace, inspirational author and lecturer Dr. Wayne Dyer suggests that we need to “Have a mind that is open to everything and attached to nothing.” He tells us “when someone suggests something to you that conflicts with your conditioning, rather than responding with, ‘That’s ridiculous, we all know that’s impossible,’ say, ‘I’ve never considered that before. I’ll think about it.’ Let go of your attachments to what you’ve been trained to believe. Open your mind to all possibilities.” When we close our minds to new ideas, we miss the opportunity to see things in a new way. You already know what you think! We need to listen to each other! There’s even a chance that seeing something from a new perspective might enhance your perception of your own viewpoint. And remember that many ideas that were once perceived as strange and crazy are now readily accepted – ideas like the world is round, there could be a horse-less carriage, or that man can fly.

The second part of Dr. Dyers secret is to have a mind that is attached to nothing. Our attachments are the source of our problems. The need to be right, to win at all costs, to be viewed by others as superior – these are all attachments. When we keep an open mind we can resist these attachments and consequently experience inner peace. When we let go of our attachments and expectations and have faith that God is in control we have a lot less to worry about and consequently feel much more at peace.

When we judge others it gives us a sense of control. To stop judging is to let go of control and leave that to God. In the Book of James 4: 12 it says, “God, is the only lawgiver and judge. He alone can save and destroy. Who do you think you are, to judge your fellowman?” It does seem rather arrogant, don’t you think, to believe that we know how others *should* be? Yet, we are so egotistical that we believe *we* know the best way to think, the best way to act or do things, the best way to look. When others don’t live up to our standards we criticize and label them. The problem is when we adopt this “us vs. them” attitude, one person has to be “right” and one must be “wrong”. Unfortunately,

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there is a lot of this “us vs. them” going on around us today. We really don’t have to judge or label them right or wrong. Isn’t it okay for them just to be different? We must remember that what is right for one person may not be right for another. You are the way you are, and so are those around you. Most likely, they will never be just like you. You might not, and probably wouldn’t, like it if they *were* just like you! So stop expecting those who are different to be what you think they should be. It’s never going to happen. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds us that we are *all* children of God, that God is the Father of *all* mankind. So we are all brothers and sisters. When we judge someone else we forget that we come from the same stock. Each one of us possesses different gifts, different minds and is on a different path. There is nothing in the Bible that says you have to agree with anybody, it only says you have to love them. And you can love people without agreeing, as you probably do with your children and family quite often. There will always be people with whom we disagree, but we can still show respect for one another.

When we accept each other as we are, we show love, as Jesus taught. Jesus himself kept company with everyone whether they were judged to be acceptable or not; Jews, Romans, and Samaritans.

Let’s look again at our scripture reading from Ephesians. It tells us to be humble, that is, to admit to ourselves that in fact we may not be superior to others. It tells us to be gentle and patient with each other, and to show our love by being tolerant with one another, by showing respect for each other. It states that God is the Lord of all, works through all and is in all. We must remember to look for God’s presence in everything. Even when we are dealing with a difficult person, we can broaden our perspective and remember that God also created the person we are dealing with. This scripture tells us that unity *is* possible and it tells us how; by treating each other with kindness and patience and tolerance but most of all with love. Love is what binds us together.

Sometimes we think our judgments are justified, but in his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote; “Do you my friend, pass judgment on others? You have no excuse at all, whoever you are. For when you judge others and then do the same things which they do, you condemn yourself.” We are all human and none of us is perfect. When Jesus told the

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people they were free to judge and to stone the adulteress woman if they themselves were free from sin, each person laid down their stone freely and willingly and left. Remember, the measure that we use to judge others is the same one that God will use for us. If God is going to judge us the way we judge others, we had better take pause and think about what we are doing.

We need to make every day Non-Judgment Day. Let's try to understand and learn more about unfamiliar things before passing judgment. Let's listen to one another's opinions with an open mind. Let's stop comparing others to what we or our society has labeled *normal*. Just because most people can see and hear, it doesn't mean that the blind or deaf are any less significant or any less precious. Let's refuse to make judgments about the importance of others. No one is superior in the invisible realm of the spirit, and our outer shells all come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and conditions.

Criticizing and passing judgment is just another bad habit, one which we are able to break. The first thing we must do in order to break a habit is to develop the awareness that we are doing it. Begin to notice when you call the guy driving in front of you a jerk because he failed to use his turn indicator. In his book, Don't Sweat the Small Stuff ...and it's all small stuff, Richard Carlson writes, "Catch yourself when you fall into your habit of insisting that things *should* be other than they are. Gently remind yourself that life is okay the way it is, right now. In the absence of your judgment, everything would be fine. As you begin to eliminate your need for perfection in all areas of your life, you'll begin to discover the perfection in life itself." When you *do* catch yourself being judgmental be patient and forgiving of yourself, avoiding self-judgments like, "Oh, I'm a bad person because I keep doing this." Merely notice that you are doing it and say, "Oops, there I go again." It takes practice, but gradually you *will* find yourself being less judgmental. I have to confess, working on this sermon has certainly heightened my awareness and I have caught myself more times than I'd like to admit.

Let's try to stop looking for reasons to be offended. Wayne Dyer writes, "When you feel offended, you're practicing judgment. You judge someone else to be stupid, insensitive, rude, arrogant, inconsiderate, or foolish, and then you find yourself upset and offended by their conduct. What you may not realize is that when you judge another

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person, you do not define them. You define yourself as someone who needs to judge others. Just as no one can define you with their judgments, neither do you have the privilege of defining others. When you stop judging and simply become an observer, you will know the inner peace I'm writing about here. With that sense of inner peace, you'll find yourself free of the negative energy of resentment, and you'll be able to live a life of contentment. A bonus is that you'll find that others are much more attracted to you. A peaceful person attracts peaceful energy. You won't know God unless you're at peace, because God is peace." When we judge others we cut ourselves off from the peace of God.

So, tomorrow, let's begin our practice by starting the day with the statement, "Today, I will judge nothing that occurs," and throughout the day, remind ourselves of that statement each time we catch ourselves judging. I'll bet you will be surprised at how many times you'll notice that you're becoming irritated or frustrated because people or things are not as you think they *should* be. If practicing this for the whole day seems too difficult, then simply say, "For the next two hours, I won't judge anything" or even "For the next hour, I will practice non-judgment." It might only be half an hour before you catch yourself! I'm sure it won't be easy, but I believe that with practice and with faith in God, we can gradually begin to replace judgment with tolerance, acceptance and love, and we can leave Judgment Day to God.