

Saint Thomas and St Thomas of the Air Church
 Fourth Sunday After Trinity
 June 27, 2021
 rmceely+

Judge not and ye shall not be judged.

Thou hypocrite
 Cast out first the beam that is in thine own eye
 And then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thine brother's eye.

Many have heard these words of Jesus
 And concluded that Jesus is telling us
 to never form a judgement
 about the conduct of another.
 Are our friends who criticize others as being “judgmental”
 Supported by Jesus' words?

Is that what Jesus is saying here?
 Is Jesus telling us
 that if we do not judge others
 we can escape our own judgment day?
 Is He saying,
 as is the fashion of our day,
 that we must never judge someone else
 or criticize someone's immoral act?
 Does He say that we must never think
 that a mass murderer has done something wrong?
 Is he telling us that we must never condemn
 sinful behavior?

Doesn't sound quite right does it?

How are we to understand this passage that begins:
 “Be ye merciful as your Father is merciful.
 Judge not and ye shall not be judged”

And ends with;

“Cast out first the beam that is in thine own eye
And then shalt thou see clearly
To pull out the mote that is thy brother’s eye”

What are we to take with us into the world from today’s Gospel?

We live in a time

in which perhaps well meaning people
have attempted to soften our language
With Politically Correct speech;

That in the guise of kindness and inclusion
Seek to remove judgment from our language
from our attitudes
from our lives.

Can any civilized society last long
Without the ability to pass judgment
On human behavior?

You see in the 1960s, a new kind of theology became fashionable
in the Seminaries.

It became known as Liberal Theology

Not to be confused with Liberal political thought.

They were perhaps misguided and innocently
(or perhaps not)

seized upon this single verse of scripture
and without context or analysis
preached and taught against judgment
against our review of human behaviour;
taught that Jesus himself had directed in this verse
that we were forbidden
from judging others.

That it was unchristian to look at human behaviour
And reach a moral conclusion that it was
Right or wrong. Good or bad.

And it was liberating:

Without scrutiny, mankind was free to do what it wanted
 Free of the restrictions
 Free of the rules, ,
 the strictures of polite society, the commandments
 It felt so good not to worry what the rest of mankind thought about
 what you were doing
 It felt good to be relieved of the responsibility to judge
 The behaviour of your fellows,

And there arose in Liberal Theology
 a kind of rolling
 Or creeping, Relativism
 In which ethics And morality
 As we knew them slowly faded away.

Because under Liberal Theology
 What is good and moral for you
 Is not necessarily
 What is good and moral for me
 Over time, there were no longer any absolutes in morality
 And soon, nothing was immoral.
 There was no longer bad behaviour
 It all became relative.

And that Liberal Theology has made its way into our culture and
 politically correct speech.
 And well meaning people have fallen into the trap.

This Gospel is misunderstood today
 And I am compelled to preach on it
 Each year
 To make certain
 That none of us fall into the Liberal Theology trap

Or if you like: Let me please,
try to untie the Judgment Knot.

Today's Gospel is from Luke's account of the Sermon that Jesus gave on the plain and the counterpart Matthew's sermon on the mount.

Today's Gospel is the part of the Sermon
That is concerned with
How we should get along together in this life;
how Christians should go about the sensitive business of
correcting other people.

Any time we isolate a single Bible verse
we ask for trouble.

The Bible can only be understood
in context and as a whole.

If we were to consider only the sentence "Judge Not and Ye Shall Not Be Judged" we would have created two big problems:

1. We'd get it wrong— almost exactly backwards in this case
And
2. We'd miss the astounding importance of what Jesus is telling us
in the Sermon on the Plain.

We need to come to grips with some terms:

To judge means
to form a moral opinion about a person
or a determination that their actions are right or wrong.

So is Jesus telling us we must not decide whether a person did the right thing or the wrong thing?

Let's do what Bible scholars did for centuries
before Liberal Theology
and take a brief look at other scripture to test the answer:

Did Jesus ever judge another?

Do you recall the time that Jesus entered the Temple grounds,
found the money changers there,
whipped them,
condemned them as a den of thieves?

Recall the time that John the Baptist told King Herod that “it is not
lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.”

Just a few chapters later in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus says
If your brother sins, rebuke him

When we look at the epistles of Paul,
we find a large number of verses
where Paul instructs us to judge
and gives us long lists of the offences that we must enforce.

The Old Testament too is full of Psalms, Prophets and God’s
messengers directing us to make righteous judgments.

Isaiah: Cry aloud,
Spare not,
lift up thy voice like a trumpet
and shew my people their transgression
and the house of Jacob their sins.

There are literally hundreds of other examples.

The point is
that when a single verse is tested against the entire Bible
and it is contradicted,
little alarm bells should start going off in our heads.

So if Jesus is not telling us to refrain from Judging others, what is He telling us to do?

How are we to go about
This sensitive business of correcting others?

Let's start from the end of today's Gospel and work to the beginning:

He warns us against hypocrisy.

To get our own house in order first
Christianity is imminently practical.

Human nature is such that

I'll have no impact correcting others
if my own life is in moral shambles.

Jesus tells the story of the beam in my eye

Blinding me to the truth,
The word of God

That prevents me from being able to see

and tell another of the spec of sin that is in his eye.

He tells the parable of the blind leading the blind

and falling into the ditch.

And He then reminds us that

the standard that we use to judge another
is the standard by which we will be judged.

We must be certain we are applying God's standard.

Then we reach the heart of it and what you should take with you into the World today.

Be merciful in the manner in which your Father is merciful.

The spirit from which we are to criticize others is that of Mercy:

Mercy: is

not giving the punishment that judgment demands

An opportunity for a new start
 God gives us mercy only when we approach Him with earnest
 repentance.

The Christian act of correcting others
 must
 of necessity
 always begin from a judgment that another has sinned.

We have a duty,
 especially to those close to us
 to those we love
 to bring serious error to their attention.

But we must always do so out of love
 and Christian concern
 for the wrong doer

With the hope
 and expectation
 that with the opportunity of a new start
 the wrong doer will live a more Godly life.

Recall the time the Jews came to Jesus with a woman who had
 been caught red handed in adultery.

No question of her guilt

[Punishment required by the Torah was death by stoning](#)

Jesus knelt to the ground

Drew in the dirt as he spoke

Finally without looking up

He said,

“ Let he who is without sin cast the first stone”

After a time he rose and looked to her and said, “Woman where are
 thy accusers?”

For they had all walked away.

Then He said ‘Woman go and sin no more.
 Traditions says that what he wrote in the dirt with his finger
 Were the names of those present
 And their most heinous sins.
 So the accusers forgave the woman her sins by their absence.
 And tradition says that Jesus then wrote next to their names
 “forgiven”
 and because the accusers were able to forgive,
 they themselves were forgiven

That story includes all the elements to illustrate what Jesus was
 telling is in the sermon on the plain.
 It is the ideal to which we must aspire.

The woman’s behavior was judged and found guilty.
 By her actions she subjected herself to punishment
 Under Jewish law and under
 The seventh commandment.

Jesus knew of her earnest repentance
 The accusers were reminded of their own sins and could not carry
 out the sentence.
 And Jesus showed mercy,
 the spirit from which His effort was based.
 He gave her the opportunity to live and to sin no more.
 Notice that while bad behavior implicates
 the quality of a person’s soul,
 we are called only to judge behavior.
 Not only are we unqualified
 We are forbidden
 From judging souls
 So, while we must judge the behavior of the woman caught in
 adultery,
 We may not judge
 Whether her soul is devoid of God’s Grace

Whether she is a base creature of God.
Judge not and ye shall not be judged
Is, an
Injunction
Against us
Judging souls
Because that is the exclusive province of God at the judgment Day.

So, you see Jesus has a lot to say about
Judgment
And correcting others.
And we would have missed some of the great lessons
From the Sermon on the plain
if we had Fallen into the trap of Liberal Theology.