

Judge Not, Lest Ye Be Judged

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, July 30, 2023
PASSAGES	Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:37-42; Leviticus 19:17-18; Psalm 141:5; Psalm 51:10-13; 2 Samuel 12:1-7; Isaiah 11:1-4; Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1; Proverbs 9:7-8; Luke 17:3-4
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:11:01 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

“Judge not” is not a ban on correction. It is a ban on hypocrisy — on trying to deal with somebody else’s sin while refusing to be dealt with yourself. The same Lord who said it also said *go and tell him his fault*, and what he wants in both cases is the same thing: clear sight, in you first and then in your brother, held together by a judge who would very much rather be merciful and is telling you so in advance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ This is not karma. Judging, condemning and forgiving are not functions of the universe — they belong to a person, and that person is warning us ahead of time about how he would prefer to deal with us.
- ◆ [Matthew 7:1-2](#) and 7:3-5 are the same point said twice. What Jesus names as hypocrisy is exercising a judgment you are not willing to have exercised on you.
- ◆ He takes no delight in anyone walking around with a log in his face. The aim of the passage is clear sight, and it is clear sight for *both* people.
- ◆ Leviticus puts the opposite danger on the table: say nothing, and someone else’s ongoing wrong can leave you sharing their guilt and nursing a grudge you have mistaken for restraint.
- ◆ In the Old Testament a righteous rebuke is something to want — “oil for my head,” in David’s words. Almost none of us have ever thought of correction that way.
- ◆ Having committed the same sin does not disqualify you from speaking the truth. David wrote Psalm 51 after adultery and murder and still said, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways.”

- ◆ Correction belongs to those walking in the Spirit, done gently, with as few people involved as possible, watching yourself the whole way. Done badly, it is exactly why this verse became a shield.

► 1:11:01

Hope Chapel had just finished 1 Corinthians, and a series on Revelation has been sitting on Matt's desk for months — he is saving it for a season when fewer people are traveling. So this Sunday was a single verse, picked up because another preacher had called it the best-known verse in the country, more familiar even than [John 3:16](#). Matt thought that was probably right. People may not be able to quote John 3:16, and they almost certainly cannot tell you what chapter this one comes from. But they can quote it.

The text, and the shape of it

► 1:13:15

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is 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 brother's eye.”

MATTHEW 7:1-5 ↗

► 1:13:46

“In a lot of ways this really speaks for itself,” Matt said. “I don't need to dress it up.” But he did want one structural observation on the table before anything else: verses one and two and verses three through five are saying the same thing in two registers. The measure-for-measure warning comes first as a principle, and then Jesus acts it out — a man with a log in his face, offering eye surgery. That is what the measure looks like when it plays out. It is hypocrisy to go after someone else's failure without touching your own, because it means exercising a judgment you have no intention of submitting to, pronouncing a condemnation you would never accept.

Not the universe. A judge.

► 1:14:58

Luke has the sister passage, and it widens the frame:

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

LUKE 6:37-38 ↗

► 1:15:39

At first hearing, Matt admitted, this can sound like *The Secret* — put something out into the universe and it comes back to you, big with the Oprah crowd in the early 2000s. It is not that. Read it carefully and ask the obvious question: is the universe in the business of judging, condemning and forgiving? Those are not forces. They are the acts of a person. “There is a judge, Jesus Christ, who as God has the authority to judge, condemn and forgive.” What we are reading is not a law of reciprocity but a warning issued in advance by someone who is longing to give mercy and will not look kindly on us condemning others while asking forgiveness for ourselves.

► 1:16:50

Luke then adds a parable that looks unrelated and is not:

“Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyo

Matt refused to let that pass as religious filler. A blind man leading a blind man is a man with a log in his face offering to guide somebody — and both of them end up in the same hole. And if a fully trained disciple ends up like his teacher, then a blind teacher produces blind students. It is all the same point, arriving from a different direction.

Three first impressions

► 1:19:06

Before getting to how people use and abuse this text, Matt slowed down to name what is simply on the surface of it. First, God clearly desires mercy. There is nothing braggadocious in the warning — it is not *judge me and see what happens*. It is a caution meant to get us walking carefully, and it is aimed at sight, not blindness. He is not teasing anyone for being blind; he wants people who can see.

► 1:19:49

Second, the warning about reciprocity quietly reaffirms that he has the right to judge. He is the judge. Which means that if we are going to act as micro-judges at all, we ought to do it the way he does it. And third — the one the room needed — correction is not banned. “He isn’t saying, well, that guy has a

speck but it's not your place. He's saying take the log out." The sentence does not end at the log. It ends at the speck, removed, with both people seeing clearly.

Leviticus behind the Sermon on the Mount

► 1:21:53

Matthew 5 through 7 reads almost like a sermon preached from an outline of Leviticus 18 and 19 — murder, wrath, sacrifice, divorce, oaths, retaliation, love of enemies, generosity. Matt was careful not to overstate it; it is not a line-for-line remake, and whether Matthew arranged the material or Jesus was preaching from Leviticus, the themes are unmistakably there. Which makes this verse worth reading beside it:

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."

LEVITICUS 19:17-18 ↗

► 1:23:13

Failing to correct someone, Matt pointed out, can implicate us in their wrong — and not only by sharing the guilt. Silence lets a grudge grow. Someone else's ongoing, unaddressed behavior will work on your heart until you hate them for it. So even for your own sake, speak frankly. "Done correctly, correcting a sin isn't a way of opposing the person but opposing the very sins that entangle us and ruin the relationship." Reasoning frankly with a neighbor is how you keep the relationship, not how you end it — which is exactly where Jesus lands too, with both parties clear-sighted and the hypocrisy gone. The result he was after was restoration and redemption for both people. The result was not a ban on correction.

What "reason frankly" actually means

► 1:24:21

The Hebrew verb behind "reason frankly" can mean simply *point out*, but in the Old Testament it usually carries the weight of rebuke — and Matt proved it by reading two other passages with the Leviticus phrasing dropped straight in. God says of David's son, the one who would build the house for his name,

"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod

— and Matt read it back the other way: *when he commits iniquity, I will reason frankly with him, with the rod of men*. That is the verb. And then David himself:

“Let a righteous man strike me — it is a kindness; let him rebuke me — it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it.”

PSALM 141:5 ↗

► 1:25:10

Same verb again, and Matt ran it through the same test out loud: *let him reason frankly with me — it is oil for my head*. Righteous correction, on this reading, “is apparently really valuable stuff,” the sort of thing a king longed for, ranked alongside kindness and oil for the head. Matt granted that oil on the head is not part of our culture and we might not want any, but the point stands: it was something pleasant, something that improved your life and your appearance.

David, who taught transgressors anyway

► 1:25:49

Here is the thing that stops most of us from ever opening our mouths: we have done the same thing, or worse, and we conclude that we have forfeited the right to speak. Matt went straight to the worst case he could find. Psalm 51 was written after David stayed home from war, took another man’s wife, and had the man killed by arrangement on the battlefield — left unsupported by his own men — to cover the pregnancy. Undignified and atrocious, and everybody probably knew.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.”

PSALM 51:10–13 ↗

► 1:27:49

Verse 13 is not hypocrisy, Matt argued, precisely because of verses 10, 11 and 12. The heart was dealt with first. “We are not operating in a tit-for-tat, legalistic, algorithmic world where I can only speak the truth if I have no record of wrongs in that regard. We are playing on God’s team, and we are always loyal to him.” That may mean saying a true thing you yourself have failed to walk in — because the question is your alignment with him, not your scorecard against somebody else.

“You are the man”

► 1:28:54

Which is why Matt wanted the backstory of Nathan’s parable and not just the punchline. A rich man with countless sheep is entertaining a traveler, is unwilling to take one of his own flock, and instead takes the single lamb a poor man loved and prepares it for his guest. David’s anger blazes: as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he had no pity. And then the pause, which Matt said must have been unbearably strange, and four words — “You are the man.”

► 1:29:36

“It’s probably true that we are often very harsh about the sins we commit, in other people,” Matt said, “because externalizing sin is so much easier than fighting it inwardly.” Then the diagnostic question of the whole message: you have noticed a speck in someone’s eye — are you opposed to specks, or are you opposed to *them*? If it is really specks, and really because you are aligned with Christ, then you will check yourself for specks too. If you are genuinely animated against the thing, the battle starts at home.

The one who judges righteously

► 1:30:33

“We all know that fighting against sin on our own is often a fruitless endeavor,” Matt said — “there is an ultimate sin warrior,” and he wanted the room to see him. A shoot comes from the stump of Jesse; the Spirit of the Lord rests on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and the fear of the Lord; and his delight is in the fear of the Lord:

“He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.”

ISAIAH 11:1-4 ↗

► 1:31:43

“That’s just like a sneak peek,” Matt said — the seedbed for the image of Jesus riding out on a horse with a sword coming from his mouth. He destroys God’s enemies by speaking. If we want to be like him, then we too want to judge righteously, to delight in the fear of the Lord, and to use our mouths.

How correction is actually done

► 1:32:31

The same Lord who said “judge not” also said “if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone” — and if he listens, you have gained your brother. If not, take one or two others, so that every charge is established by two or three witnesses. If he still refuses, tell it to the church. And if he refuses even the church, he is to you as a Gentile and a tax collector, which Matt admitted “might sound really bizarre,” but amounts to this: not in the church. These do not contradict “judge not”; they are the procedure it protects. “This godly correction is a way that, like our Lord, we can overcome evil with our words — words of truth, words of testimony about God.” And lest anyone conclude the warrant is limited to sins committed against you personally:

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

GALATIANS 6:1 ↗

► 1:34:20

Matt read the conditions out one at a time. *Anyone* — not just the person who wronged you; anyone in the body caught in any transgression. *Those who are spiritual* — it comes from his Spirit and from alignment with him no matter what, not from a grudge. “Not because we are against that person, and I will selectively become a self-appointed sin sheriff, but only for people I don’t like.” *In a spirit of gentleness* — the aim is winning over a brother, not destroying someone who made you angry. And *keep watch on yourself*, because this is precisely the errand on which a person falls.

► 1:34:55

Which leaves the other misuse, the one Matt called a shield. If the rule is that pricking my conscience with scripture makes you judgey and gets you cut out of my life, then I have just judged and condemned in the name of a verse about not judging and condemning. The text cannot be made to do that.

► 1:35:32

And then the second caution, in the same breath as the permission: we should do this, but we should be careful how. In a spirit of gentleness. “Starting with as small a population of people involved as possible.” Based on seeing clearly, not based on teams. “It’s important that being right is not greater or more important than knowing the truth, whatever it is.”

Why correction stings, and whose team we are on

► 1:36:09

Underneath all of it is a question about loyalty. If I want mercy for me and not for you, what team am I actually on? “It would seem to me that in that sense I’m on team me. I’m not on team mercy.” Jesus, Matt said, is almost letting us reason our way there sociopathically: you want mercy, you want to be forgiven, you want God to be generous with you — all right, then be generous and forgiving and merciful to others, “because I long to do that to you.”

► 1:36:47

“But this isn’t a you versus them thing,” he added. “I like how Jesus is openly telling us ahead of time: I want to be merciful to you, I want you on my team — team forgiveness, team mercy.”

► 1:37:27

So why are we so sensitive to correction? Matt named two shapes it takes. One is getting real mad about everyone else’s sins and always moving to confront — “kind of the way King David was when he was mad about this guy in the parable.” The other is a stubborn rebelliousness that never wants to hear it: *don’t talk to me about what I’m doing. Judge not, bro.*

► 1:38:06

Some of our sensitivity, Matt allowed, is earned: we do this so badly to each other that it can be genuinely traumatizing. But Proverbs 9:7–8 names the other half — whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse; reprove a scoffer and he will hate you, but reprove a wise man and he will love you. When we are entangled in something we tend to align ourselves with the scoffing and the wickedness, and abuse and injury and hatred come out of us on contact — “and that is an issue for us to repent over.” Matt included himself without flinching: “I’m not sure which one is my first go-to. Is it scoffing, or hatred? It might be a scoff. But I know that in that mode I am walking unrighteously.”

► 1:38:47

And the flip side, which is the test: “when I am walking wisely, when someone corrects me I love them for it.” Because we are not competing against one another. Whether we look dumb, whether we are right or wrong, whether someone corrects us or we are the ones who have to bring something — it is always about alignment with him, allegiance and loyalty to Jesus.

► 1:39:21

He closed where Luke closes it:

“Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

LUKE 17:3-4 ↗

► 1:40:04

Intense, Matt said, but good to embrace — because to God we are far worse than seven times a day, and he longs to be received graciously and mercifully every time he comes. If he wants that treatment from God that badly, he can consider extending a much smaller amount of forgiveness to someone who sinned against him far less than he has sinned against God. “My goal is not to win, or at least it shouldn’t be. My goal is to be in Christ, to drink it up, to just gorge on the grace and the forgiveness and the mercy — to revel in it, to celebrate it.”

► 1:40:53

And what celebrating it looks like from the outside is forgiving others when they sin against us, blessing our enemies, praying for the people who hassle and antagonize and persecute us. “That’s a privilege to do, not a huge burden, because we were invited into Christ, who is all of these things for us.” Then he prayed — that God would keep speaking about the practical ways to walk this faith out, would bring specific acts of obedience to mind for him and for the whole body, and would in mercy make it understandable enough to actually do. And with that he called the Heart Ministry teams forward, a roomful of people ready to pray with anyone who wanted it, and sent the rest out in peace to love and serve the Lord.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Matthew 7:1–5](#)
- [Luke 6:37–38](#)
- [Luke 6:39–40](#)
- [Leviticus 19](#)
- [Leviticus 19:17–18](#)
- [2 Samuel 7:13–14](#)
- [Psalm 141:5](#)
- [Psalm 51:10–13](#)
- [2 Samuel 12:1–7](#)
- [Isaiah 11:1–4](#)
- [Matthew 18:15–17](#)
- [Galatians 6:1](#)
- [Proverbs 9:7–8](#)
- [Luke 17:3–4](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Which way do you tend to misuse this verse — as a shield when someone gets close to something in you, or as a bat when someone else is wrong?
2. Matt asked whether we are opposed to specks or opposed to the person. Think of a recent case: which was it, honestly, and how could you tell?
3. Leviticus 19 says silence can leave you carrying a grudge. Is there someone you have said nothing to, and has the silence made you more loving toward them or less?
4. Psalm 141 calls rebuke “oil for my head.” Who in your life is actually permitted to correct you, and what happens in you when they do — a scoff, hatred, or love?
5. Galatians 6 gives the conditions — spiritual, gentle, self-watchful, as few people as possible. Which one would you have to work hardest at this week, and with whom?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=md0iQKill6w&t=4261s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.