



Red Letter City
Judging
Sunday July 24, 2016
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

We are continuing today, through this issue of control. The subject of the red letters we are about to read is “judging others.”

and I want to remind you of something that we said last week, so that we can lay some ground work for where we are going today. Because most

people would say to me, “what does judging others have to do with control?”

So I want to remind you of what we said last week... “If you give someone an inch, they will take a mile.”

So Jesus starts the whole section by dealing with money... because it is the most common singular thing that has a hold on us.

and he moves from there to show us that, if we allow ourselves to maintain control of one area of our lives, it won't be long until we are trying to control multiple areas of our lives... and of course, eventually, we will want to control ALL areas of our lives.

That is why people are so anxious. Because they want control, **THEY WANT TO BE IN CONTROL...** but they know that they aren't. And until they stop trying to be in control, and not only just acknowledge that Jesus is in control but also **GIVE** him control over every area of their life... there **WILL** always be anxiety.

But destructive things tend to lead to things that are even more destructive.

And this is the next step in the process.

Because, after you have gotten used to controlling everything in your life... and you have kind of created this perfect world of the way that you want things to be FOR YOU... at some point, somebody else is going to get in the way of that perfect world that you have created.

and so, in order for your perfect, controlled world to remain in your control, you are going to have to figure out a way to start controlling them to.

and so, sometimes subtly and even unaware of it at times... we use judgment toward others as means for getting what we want from them.

Because if someone is not acting the way that you want them to act, what better way to get them to act the way that you want them to act, than to make them feel bad about the way that they are acting.

And that is where Jesus takes us today.

Into the 7th chapter of Matthew, verses 1-6.

“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. **“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”**

Lets Pray

Everybody loves the first part of this section... but the last part, the part about the pigs and the dogs, most people are just confused by.

But they love the first part, simply because, in our culture everything is about “MY RIGHTS.”

I have the right to do this. And you DON'T have the right to judge me for it.

So the idea is that there can never be any correction. We all get to have our private little worlds and act however we want to act and the only right that you DON'T have is the right to interfere in someone else's life.

That is kind of a summary of where our world is right now on this subject.

and where that may work in a godless society, that is NOT what Jesus is saying here.

In fact, everything about the sermon on the mount is about a Kingdom in which its citizens LAY DOWN THEIR RIGHTS for the sake of a greater good.

So please please please, do not let this verse convince you that you should have no accountability with other people and that other Christians have no right to step in if your life seems like it is getting out of control.

Paul says it this way:

For what have I to do with judging (*krino*) outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge (*krino*)? **God judges those outside.** "Purge the evil person from among you."

In Acts 5, when Ananias and Sapphire sold a piece of land and gave some of the money to the church... but claimed that they had given everything that they received from the land to the church..

Peter made a judgment... Because they had brought evil into the church in a moment in history where everything about the church was pure.

Everything about it was honest, and people coming together and sharing needs. And Peter even told them, "you didn't have to give us all of the money for the land... but why would you lie and tell us that you did?"

He called them out because what they were doing was wrong. And God backed him up and did what Peter said He would do.

John, the disciple that Jesus loved wrote his first epistle as a letter to the churches telling them that they had to stop buying into the lies of the docetists... This heretical teaching that said that Jesus was God but he never actually came in the flesh.

Paul tells us in Galatians 2:11 (GNT) that “when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him in public, because he was clearly wrong.” - after Peter had separated himself from the Gentiles and essentially put a box around the gospel of Jesus Christ. That conflict apparently did not last long, because it was dealt with.

There are times when things in the church need to be dealt with. They need to be addressed, and sometimes even need to be brought into the light.

So we know that we don't judge those outside... But even within the church, we can fall into the trap that Jesus is describing in the sermon on the mount.

So again, the word Jesus uses here is “*krino*.”

and it shows up a lot in the New Testament but the word has several different meanings in several different contexts. But the definition that seems to most fit what Jesus is saying here is:

“to pronounce an **opinion** concerning right and wrong”

Don't pronounce opinions concerning right and wrong.

Don't make pronouncements that ultimately speak to the value and character of another person just so that you can prove your point.

1 Corinthians 4:5 seems to shed the most light on it, this is the Apostle Paul writing and he says:

“Therefore do not pronounce judgment (*krino*) before the time, before the Lord comes, **who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness**

and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”

The first part says not to do this...

and the second part tells us what it will be like when God does do this...

He will bring to light the things that are hidden in darkness, and he will disclose to purposes of the heart.

So we don't need to mess with doing that now... because he will do it later.

This can get confusing to people, because Jesus at the beginning of the sermon on the mount tells us that we are supposed to be salt and light, and that we are light of the world.

but like we talked about, really what Jesus is saying is that we are the carriers of that light. We are not the source of it... When you walk into a room and you flip on a light, you get power... but if the electricity goes out... that light by itself is useless. It has to be powered by something, but that power can be used for a variety of things.

and the problem is that some people take the light that they were given for the purpose of showing people to Jesus, and instead they use that light as a way to expose people's darkness.

Around 8 years ago now, when we were living in Los Angeles Dawn and I worked with our pastor, Pastor Brad Reed on an illustrated sermon... and in this sermon one of the things that he did was he showed two different ways that people can use the light that they have... and he got one of those super bright work lights and in a room full of darkness he began shining this extremely bright light into peoples faces. Because that, unfortunately, is more representative of how many Christians use the light they are given... and they believe that it is a good thing.

So they are using the light to expose people, and to show them what they are doing wrong, and to judge people.

The concept was that “the light is not bad. The light is good. But how we manipulate the light can make it bad.” and even though nothing that we do can actually make the gospel itself bad... the way we present it to someone can leave them thinking “this is awful.”

and that is what Jesus is talking about here in the sermon on the mount.

This is not about someone trying to reach someone else for Jesus because they love them. This is about someone trying to control someone else through something that they think they have against them.

And maybe that “thing” is that they don’t know Jesus or maybe that “thing” is that they think that person has strayed from Jesus. But the heart of the matter, and the way the light is used, is the issue.

Because ultimately we like to think that our judgments are about other people but ultimately when we judge, we do it for ourselves.

It is rooted in control.

you have to remember... to us, today, we began Matthew chapter 7. But when this was originally written, it was one continuous train of thought.

Jesus goes from how we control money... one area of our lives... into our we let worry and anxiety consume all areas of our lives... and then he moves into judging. Which a lot of people think that at this point Jesus changes the subject... but like I told you at the beginning...

I do not share that belief.

I believe that there is a flow to this who thing. Because if you spend your whole life thinking that you are in control of your circumstances... and someone comes along and threatens that control... in order for you to remain feeling in control of your circumstances, you are going to have to do something that makes them do what you want them to do.

So we use guilt. We use manipulation. We use things about their lives against them.

But Jesus is telling us “that is not the way you should go about getting things from people!” and if you think that you can heap onto someone else the kind of guilt that makes them do what you think that they should do, then your problem goes a lot farther back than just judging. It goes farther back than anxiety.

It goes all the way back to treasures. You have a treasure problem.

You do.

You think that *someone else* should be your puppet. Someone else should rearrange their life to fit into your life, or to make you feel more comfortable, or more confident.

and we sugar coat it as “caring” for them and their well being but it is not way that Jesus says reaches people.

That type of control will ONLY push people away.

Think of it this way... How do you react when someone else sins?

And How do you view your sin?

Do you view the times in your life that you have fallen as mistakes? Or do you define who you are by those things?

Most of us like to think, “that is not me. That is a mistake that I made.”

But yet when someone else does something wrong, especially if it is a sin that we don't struggle with or don't understand... Do we give them the same grace that we expect to get... do we give them the benefit of the doubt that they did something wrong but that is not who they are?

Or do we view them different? View them as sinful. View them as evil?

Do we put a label over them, even if only in our own minds, that they now have to work tirelessly to prove is not the real them?

There is this moment in 1 Samuel 24... David is still on the run from King Saul, but he has an opportunity to kill Saul when Saul goes in to a cave to relieve himself. But the bible says that David did not kill Saul... instead, he arose and “stealthily cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.”

So David spared Saul. Saul who was trying to kill David! and instead of killing Saul, he merely cut off the corner of his robe. But the very next verse (1 Sam 24:5) it says that “David’s heart struck him because he had cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.”

Now, in light of everything that was happening, you would think that what he had done to Saul was extremely gracious...

yet David was extremely sorrowful about what he had done...

why?

On the corner of the men’s garments in that day were something called Tassels. Everyone was commanded to have them, as a reminder of the commandments of the Lord.

Look at what Numbers 15:37-41 says about them:

“The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, **not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes**, which you are inclined to where after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God.”

So every time that the person would look down and see the tassels, they would be reminded of everything that God had done for them, and all the things that he expects them to live by so they don’t derail their lives.

It was a reminder of all the things that Jesus talks about in the sermon on the mount... not to follow after your own heart...

and your own eyes.

and it was a reminder that they belonged to God.

Even Jesus wore tassels.

In one of the most well known miracles recorded in the bible, the woman with the issue of blood... this woman who had been bleeding for 12 years and had spent everything that she had on doctors, and one day when she heard that Jesus was in town she thought "if I could just touch the hem of his garment." (Matt. 9, Luke 8)

This woman had so much faith that she believed she didn't even need to stop Jesus and have him lay hands on her... instead, she believed she would be healed if she could just touch the "hem of his garment" -

"hem" means his tassel.

If she could just touch his tassel.

and of course Jesus immediately felt the power leave him... so Jesus said "someone touched me"

and the woman came out and that when she touched him, she was immediately healed.

So even Jesus, like every other Jew, wore this reminder of all that the Lord had done.

It was a symbol that they were part of God's people. A reminder of the commandments... Do you guys remember last year when we talked about how the ten commandments were actually a ketubah between God and Israel? It was the terms of their marriage...

Well the tassel was like a wedding ring that God commanded them to wear.

They were a visual statement that says “we are God’s chosen people.”

It was what set them apart.

and THAT is what David cut off from Saul.

And that is why David’s heart was so heavy after he had done that.

Because what He had done was he had made himself judge.

No, he didn’t execute full justice on Saul and he did not kill him which he could have justified himself in doing... but instead he cut off the thing that showed that Saul belonged to God. He stole his wedding ring (if you will)...

He put a label on him that said “this man is no longer a part of the covenant.”

and I think that is more often than not, what judgment looks like in most cases. It is not so much about a blatant punishment as much as it is about a character assassination. It is more about letting people’s pasts hang over them... Maybe it is not something we cut off...

Maybe it is something we put on them.

Now, Jesus is NOT saying that we should not be discerning. The gift of discernment is an incredible thing... and being able to look at a situation and determine if God is in it or not, and determine if it is full of darkness or not, that is not the same as judgment.

Seeing the things hidden in darkness is not judgment... judgment is when you bring those things to light for other people in a way that exposes them or manipulates them to change.

Because ultimately nobody changes by manipulation. They only look like they changed.

This is not about accountability. This is not about people holding each other to a standard. If you are a christian in this place and you have a devastating sin in your life that somehow the Holy Spirit brings to my attention, I am not going to ignore that.

I am not judging you by bringing that to your attention. Or even by taking steps to restore you in.

If you confess something to me, which the bible says to do, in James epistle it says “confess your sins to one another for HEALING...” Healing doesn’t always come in an instant, sometimes it looks like a process. Sometimes it looks like someone coming alongside of you and walking through the coals with you. But is it for healing? Or is it for judgment?

if you confess something... I am going to be quick to work to restore you... but that restoration may look like a process. And that process is NOT JUDGMENT.

What Jesus is talking about, is the way that we talk to people to get them to do what we want, or to buy whatever it is we are selling.

He is talking about the way that we show people what He looks like. And when you view it from that perspective I hope that it helps you realize how careful we must be with this. Because you might be the only Jesus that someone ever sees. And if that Jesus looks like a spotlight exposing all the areas of their lives that they were already embarrassed about... you are manipulating the light.

And this is where Jesus gives us an absolutely brilliant example.

“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”

another version says “Don’t cast your pearls before swine.”

There is a correlation between these two things... Holy... thats a good thing. Right?

Pearls... those are good things, right?

I remember the first time I bought Dawn a pearl necklace. We never had a lot of money so other than her wedding ring, the pearl necklace was the nicest gift I think I had ever given her, and I was so excited to give it to her.

and these weren't even the fancy pearls. They were simple. But she loves pearls and she loved them, and I was so excited to give them to her.

There is a very short parable in Matthew 13:45-46, and it says this:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

This is what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. It is worth selling everything that you have to buy this one pearl... this pearl that is the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus is saying... “this is worth everything. It is worth giving up everything for. Nothing could possibly be more important than this.”

and of course in both these instances, the pearl is just imagery. It is a metaphor for the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a metaphor for what God wants to do in your life, and in other peoples lives. But it is of infinite value!

But if you give a pearl to a pig, what on earth is it going to do with it?

Is it going to wear it? Is it going to look at itself in the mirror?

No! It is not going to have a clue what to do with it. All it cares about is eating. You aren't going to help a pig out by giving it a pearl necklace. You are going to help it out by giving it some food.

and sometimes we project things on people that they are not ready for. We give them Jesus in a way that to us may seem good... to us may seem Holy, because we know what happened in our own lives...

but to the person receiving it... it is like, “What is this? This doesn't help me. This just makes me feel awful.” Or “it makes me feel angry.”

and when the gospel is sandwiched by judgment... or even when the gospel is the thing sandwiching judgment... typically all people will ever hear is the part about judgment.

The part about you showing them why what they are doing is wrong... which of course to most people sounds like "this person thinks that they are better than I am because they don't do what they are saying that I do."

and who would accept a gospel like that?

who would give their life to be part of a group of people who self righteously think that they are better than everyone else?

Please hear me... I am not saying that you shouldn't witness.

one of the biggest myths about this verse is that it is saying that you there are certain people that you shouldn't even give the gospel too. If that were true then Jesus would be ultimately contradicting even the work on the cross. The gospel is for everybody.

But not everybody can hear it the same way. and if you use judgment as the way that you show someone the gospel then in the end it is very likely that they will attack you.

If your representation of the gospel of Jesus Christ is one of judgment...

you may win people, but ultimately they are going to be the ones who will turn on you.

Who are the people who most resent the church?

Typically?

I have found it tends to be the ones who bought into something that they were force fed. And the moment that they realized that they had been manipulated into believing something, they wanted to get as far away from

it as possible. They became the most outspoken critics of the church. They are the ones who attack it the most.

Because their experience of Jesus did not match who Jesus really is.

and it is not because that person just was not cut out to hear the gospel, it was because the way he was given it, was in a way that Jesus commanded his church NOT to present him.

He was given something Holy... Something that was designed for him... but he didn't know what to do with it because it wrapped in something he couldn't handle.

If you give a pig a pearl what is it going to do with it?

It is going to eat it! That's all pigs do. They eat things.

But pearls aren't meant to be eaten. And even though it may look beautiful it would taste awful!

and when they realize that you gave them something that wasn't food, they are going to be furious.

and when the gospel is presented by way of judgment, it is the exact same way. It may sound great...it may look beautiful... but it won't sit well in their stomach.

It is a form of manipulation which is a form of control.

and it is more subtle than we think. I've done it more often than I care to admit... I try not to.

Take our Kids Club. It has been so fruitful, there has been so many amazing things that have been happening... and it is okay for me to tell you about those things... People are coming to Jesus. Parents are coming to Jesus. This week is 4 days and we are going to minister to, we are believing for hundreds and hundreds of people in our neighborhood. And I really want you guys to all be there. The bible tells us that the harvest is

plentiful but the laborers are few... and that is a real issue we are facing with our kids club, especially on days when the weather cooperates with us.

So I have two approaches that I could take for trying to get you involved...

I could show you what is happening, and ask if it is something that you want to be a part of... show you the good and tell you how excited I am about it but ultimately leave the decision up to you. I can quote Jesus, and show you how these children are real treasures... and see if God speaks to your heart. That is okay. Its not bad to ask people to be involved in something. Its not bad to show people how amazing things are going.

but instead, this is what people tend to do... and I have inadvertently done this... every pastor in the world may be guilty of this one... I could show you pictures, I could show you what is happening, and then perhaps I say something like "You *should* be a part of this."

and this could be harmless, but it also could be pearls before swine.

Now, wait a minute you may think... "I should be?"

That is a judgment. It is subtle. But it is a judgment. It goes after someone's character. You are saying, "there is something you should be doing, that you aren't doing right now." and some people can handle being spoken to that way but to others it is like they are a pig and all they want is food and instead you are giving them a pearl... and they won't be able to digest that pearl and ultimately if they try and digest it they will feel tricked.

"Why did you give this to me?"

Because IF I tell you that you SHOULD be doing something, and you in your own free will, that Jesus gave to you, you think that your time would be better spent helping make coffee, or visiting the sick, or helping with the homeless ministry, or serving somewhere else that has a soup kitchen... or at home with your wife who worked 60 hours this week and you have barely seen, and you think it would be a *way* better investment in that moment to invest in your marriage...

Then what makes me right, and you wrong???... about YOUR LIFE.

I am playing God. I am doing the Holy Spirit's job. His job is to convict. His job is to burden your heart in such a way that you can't function until you meet the need that is before you.

Jesus says in Luke 10:2, and I just quoted it, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

There is a void. Ask God. He call fill the void. Ask people. and see what God does in their hearts.

but ultimately, I don't want laborers who don't want to be laboring in that way. I don't want people who are suffering through something that to someone else would be a totally life giving, amazing experience.

Don't cast your pearls before swine! Otherwise something that to someone else would have been life, to the person doing it, it is a chore. It is frustrating. and they never wanted to do it in the first place.

Is helping with the kids club a good thing? Yes! Its a pearl. Its incredibly valuable. It is real treasure as we talked about a couple of weeks ago. But if it is given through judgment, or it is given to someone who can't fully comprehend how valuable it is yet, it could become harmful.

God works on the hearts of people... and its certainly okay to talk to them and to encourage them to join you and to be a part of things... but be careful that you aren't doing it in a way that makes them feel like:

"If I don't do this, then there is something wrong with me."

Because first of all, most of the time that is not true at all. and second of all, in the end they will resent you for it. You can't make friends for yourself by way of manipulation.

But that does work both ways. Because where we must not be casting judgment toward each other we do need to be uplifting each other and holding each other accountable and holding ourselves to a standard...

and if the only times you serve are the times that you are guilted into it, I would encourage you to ask yourself why that is?

Truthfully, people use things like guilt because they don't think anything else will work...

But there is another way to get through to people.

It is the section that Jesus gets into next. And it will be the theme of our entire message next week.

Jesus tells us, you don't get what you want from people by judging them. You may get what you want, but ultimately, it will be bad.

It always ends bad when it starts like that.

But Jesus says something different.

He says:

Ask, and it will be given to you;
Seek, and you will find;
knock, and it will be opened to you.

He then goes on in the next section to say (and we will cover this in two weeks):

whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

The golden rule.

Do you see how these all connect?

The first thing that Jesus says here is Judge not, lest you be judged.

and again I am immediately brought back to the 5th beatitude. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

The only beatitude that gives you what you give.

and this is just another way of saying that.

You want someone to treat you one way... treat them that way.

Give mercy, get mercy.

Give judgment, get judgment.

You ultimately will either be merciful or you will be judgmental, and whichever you sow you most definitely will reap.

So why not sow mercy? Why not sow love? Why not sow compassion?

Why not give something that you actually want to get in return instead of viewing the world from an aerial view as if you are way up high others are beneath you.

Think about Jesus.

He had an aerial view. He saw the whole thing, and he was willing to come and make himself *like* us... so that he could pay the price of our sins, for us.

And I love the way that the apostle John writes about Jesus. Because in his epistles, everything to do with Jesus, John equates to love. Even judgment.

1 John 4:16-17 -

“we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, **so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment**, because as he is so also are we in this world.”

See, ultimately, there is going to be a judgment. But according to what John is saying here... on that day, we don't have to worry. Because of love.

Because God's judgment toward His people is love. (Gungor has a song and that is a line in the song)

Is he going to have to make a decision? Yes!

Remember what Paul said to the Corinthians? YOU! do not pronounce judgment before the Lord comes!

Because he is coming... and he will bring to light the things that are hidden.

He is going to weigh it all on a scale of right and wrong.... Our whole lives are going to be on that scale.

but because of love, and how much he was willing to pay for you because of that love...

all the good that we did in our own strength won't be standing alone on that scale.

He is going to be standing on the scale, right next to it. Tipping the judgment, no matter what we deserve, to the side of love.

Because God is love,

But notice how it ends... "as he is so also are we in this world."

Our judgment toward others, must be love. It must be mercy. It must be seeing the world through their eyes... from their perspective... it must be grace.

We have to give people what they need, because ultimately we are responsible for the people who God puts into our lives. Judgment won't win them. It just won't.

But love... Love just may.

Love literally solved all of the worlds problems the moment that Jesus died on the cross. And that message, by itself, is so good...

that its enough.