

SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

ON JUDGING OTHERS | MATTHEW 7:1-6

Several years ago, Marshal Shelley wrote a book entitled, "Well-Intentioned Dragons." He describes well-intentioned dragons as people who mean well, but usually end up burning the house down.

Well-intentioned dragons come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. According to Shelley, some are bird dogs, others wet blankets, there are snipers, bookkeepers, merchants of muck, and legalists. You have to admire Shelley's willingness to give them the benefit of the doubt, but to us, they look and feel like dragons. If we are honest, we'll have to admit there is a bit of dragon in all of us.

The gospel calls us to a higher place. The gospel invites us to be meaningfully engaged in each other's lives to build one another up. Paul tells us when we "speak the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ (Ephesians 4:15)."

So if we want to be a mature body of believers, we will have to be painfully aware of our worst instincts—those tendencies that undermine the integrity of our relationships. As we continue in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus highlights three of those tendencies. He warns us we will do more harm than good when we have a critical spirit, lack self-awareness, and press too hard.

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## **A CRITICAL SPIRIT (vv. 1-2)**

<sup>1</sup> "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

1. The word we translate judge can have either a positive or negative connotation depending on the context. It can describe either a healthy sense of discernment or a critical spirit.
  - a. How would you describe the differences between discernment and a critical spirit?
  - b. What are some instances where we should be discerning?
  - c. How can a critical spirit undermine the integrity of our relationships?
2. Jesus tells us, "the measure you use will be measured to you." On one level the proverb speaks to the natural consequences of our actions. If we are critical of others, they will naturally tend to be far more critical of us. On a much deeper level, it speaks of God's response to our actions. If we are stingy in extending grace to others, God will be stingy with us (see Matthew 6:15).
  - a. Which of these do you think Jesus primarily has in mind? Why?
  - b. What is our greatest motivation for being gracious with others?
  - c. What are some other motivations?

## **A LACK OF SELF AWARENESS (vv. 3-5)**

<sup>3</sup> "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

1. Why do we tend to see the faults of others more clearly than we do our own?

2. Whose blindspots should be of greater concern, ours or those of our spouses, children, coworkers, and fellow church members? Why?
3. According to Jesus, when are we best equipped to help others deal with their blind spots?
4. What are some practical steps we can take to be more aware of our own blind spots?
5. When we become aware of personal blindspots, how should we respond?
6. How can we help others do the same?

## **PRESSING TOO HARD (v. 6)**

<sup>6</sup> "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

1. Who do you think Jesus is describing in verse 6?
2. Is it OK for us to label others as "dogs" or "pigs" and write them off? Why or why not?
3. How should we respond when someone is not open to hearing the truth?