

“WHICH LENS”

Pastor Mike Corwin

TEXT: JAMES 4:11-12

GOD’S WORD: MATTHEW 7:1-5

I – JUDGING:

I think the words of Jesus you heard read this morning are some of the hardest ones to live by. “Stop judging others and you will not be judged.” The King James version is the one you’ve heard quoted all your life, “JUDGE NOT, LEST YE BE JUDGED.” I’m told by my Savior that I have to be nice to others or He won’t be nice to me, and then he places me in an imperfect world and expects me to live this way!

Have you driven on the streets and highways of this state lately? How do you keep your cool, how do you not judge someone who pulls out in front of you as a moron? I’ve told Julie that if she ever hears me say “Ramming Speed” she should brace herself because it means I’ve had enough. How hard is it to figure out that red means stop, not tromp on the gas and get through the light anyhow? Then there’s the whole pandemic thing and the racial injustice thing we’re all living through right now. No matter what side of the fence you sit on, how do you listen to the news, see what’s going on around you and not think that the inmates are truly in charge of the asylum now! We have politicized the pandemic. We are going overboard with some of the protests. Places have blocked the public from access to streets and other places to make a point. Statues are being torn down by people who don’t even know their history. We are calling for the abolishment of police departments. And the list goes on and on. And I’m supposed to keep calm and not judge them!

It’s about this time that my wife tells me to “get off your soapbox.” But you see my point, I struggle with this one and I’m guessing all of you do too. It’s easy to judge others.

II – MOVIE CLIP:

I try very hard not to look at other people with judgment in my heart, but to look at them with love in my heart. To do this I have to look at them not through the lenses of my glasses and my eyes, but through the lens that God uses. Watch this morning's clip and you'll see what I mean...

SHOW "GET SERVICE" CLIP

III – WHICH LENS?:

The clip ended with the question of the day, "GET IT?" Do you? Do you truly get it? When I look at people with my eyes, with my lens, I see only the apparent and outward things, the things that drive me absolutely bananas. I interpret the actions of others through my prejudices, biases, and history and I judge them accordingly. Sometimes it causes me to get angry, to belittle them, to condemn them. All the things I'm not supposed to do.

But when I look at them through God's lens, I see them differently. I realize that not everyone can be like me or please me. That not everyone thinks like me or acts like me. When I look at them with the lens of my heart, the eyes of my heart, with God's eyes, then I see them differently. I see people who are struggling in an imperfect world. I see people who have been hurt in various ways by judgmental people like me. I see people who are struggling with drug or alcohol addiction. I see people who can't find a sustained relationship of love, people who leave the house everyday after being with a dysfunctional family. When I look through God's eyes I see people who need money just to eat or keep a roof over their head, I see people who are in an abusive relationship, I see people who have been molested or bullied or are struggling with their sexual identity. When I look through God's eyes I see the person who is struggling with depression or mental illness, I see the person who is contemplating suicide because they just can't take it anymore. When I look through God's eyes I realize there may be a reason for the actions that set me off. I realize that the person who has irritated me needs my love, not my judgment. I realize the universe does not revolve around me.

Do you "GET IT?" Which lens are you looking through? The human lens or God's lens? Are you judgmental, do you look at others and have a negative opinion? Are you living by the Words of Jesus and not judging others? WHICH LENS do you use?

IV – TEXT – JAMES 4:11-12:

In the book of James we find a reminder of Jesus' words. The writer of James believed to be James – the brother of Jesus, puts it this way...

James 4:11 - 12 (NLT)

¹¹ Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. ¹² God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?

James doesn't use a bunch of flowery words to get his point across, he gets right down to the nitty-gritty about this judgment thing. He simply says don't do it! Don't slander one another, don't talk bad about one another, and don't engage in juicy gossip about one another because when you do so you're not just criticizing each other, you are also judging one another. And once you do that you're not only judging each other contrary to the words of Jesus, you are judging God's law too.

The law he's talking about was given to the people by God at the time of Moses. If you want to read it yourself take a look at Leviticus 19:18. This one is so important to God that Jesus repeated it in the New Testament. He said, "and a new commandment I am giving to you, love one another just as I have loved you." When we treat one another with a judgmental heart and attitudes, we are breaking this commandment and thus telling God we've judged his law, his commandment, to be invalid. I'm guessing this makes God unhappy. Maybe that's why Jesus warned us that we will be judged the same way we judge others.

Then James makes sure we get the point. He says that God alone is the Judge. He alone has the power to give life or to take life, to save people or to destroy them. To judge someone means you are usurping the power and authority of God. I got to believe God can rightfully look upon our lives and ask "Who do you think you are?" Are you better than God? Wiser than God? What gives you the right to judge others? It's my law – not yours!"

James isn't talking about the judges who are given the authority to make judgments in a court of law. God did provide for them. He's talking about those who use harsh, unkind, and derogatory words or actions towards his people. He's talking about those who have a critical spirit and have no trouble finding the faults of others. James is talking about you and me.

May God forgive us.

V – LOOK WITH LOVE:

It's when I open the eyes of my heart that I start feeling compassion instead of judgment, and that I hope God is using his lens to judge me, not mine. It's when I realize that, "There but for the grace of God go I." It's when I realize that if I'm judging others, they're judging me. It's when I look at others only with the love of God that's been given to me through his Son Jesus the Christ that I'm obeying God's wishes and being a living example of his Son Jesus. How are your lenses? Do you need to take them off and clean them? Do you need to change them from human lenses to the lens of God? Do you need to tint them with the color of God's love?

One of our shut-ins sent me a little note a while back with a poem on it that she wrote and I want to use it to end this morning's message. She wrote

My face in the mirror
Isn't wrinkled or drawn.
My house isn't dusty
The cobwebs are gone.
My garden looks lovely
And so does the lawn.
I think I might never
Put my glasses back on.

To win the community of Bucyrus for Jesus Christ we must take our human glasses off and put on the glasses of God. Then we'll see people as the children of God instead of the flawed people we all are.

AMEN