

We will focus this week on being generous in our judgments. For most of us, this is a very difficult task especially as naivete is transformed into wisdom and discernment. The difficulty is not conceptual but practical. We all know that we need to be more gracious in our judgments of others but it is a difficult thing to change practically so, this week we will focus on practical steps to help us all become more generous in our judgments.

## Day 1

### The Mirror

Luke 6:41-42; John 8:7; Romans 2:1; James 1:24; Romans 2:21-24; 2 Samuel 12:5-7; John 8:40-44

Jesus encourages us in Luke 6 to take the log from our own eye before trying to deal with the speck in our brothers. In several passages, the bible encourages us to use the same standard of judgment on ourselves as we do for other people. The reality of life is that there is only one set of actions we have direct control over: our own. While we may wish people were different than they are, we have no control over how others behave. Excessive judgment on others is therefore mostly wasted. In addition to this, while we can judge the actions of others, we cannot judge the hearts of others. We can, however, render judgment on our own hearts and what we find there is usually horrifying. While we often give ourselves the benefit of the doubt, a courtesy we rarely extend to others, the truth is our motives are far from pure. There is enough going on in our own hearts, minds, and actions to keep us busy for a very long time. Spend time today applying proper judgment to your own heart, mind, and actions. Think of one thing that you can develop a plan to work on improving and execute on that plan.

## Day 2

### Give Up

Ephesians 2:5-8; Romans 3:22-26; Romans 4:16; James 1:16-18; John 1:12-13; Romans 10:9-10

When confronted with the depth and breadth of our own sin the first thing that usually comes to our mind is that we need to fix it. I even encouraged you yesterday to pick a problem and work on fixing it. The problem is you really can't. I don't mean that it is impossible to improve any part of your life, I mean you can't fix your life to the extent you need to in order to save yourself. Salvation is only by the grace of God through faith in Christ. So why work on things in your life then? Not so you can save yourself, but so you can draw closer to Christ. So that you do not miss out on the rich blessing that he desires for you. So that you don't burden those around you with your sin. There are many reasons to pursue sanctification, but those only come after we have accepted our fallen state, understood that we are powerless to do anything about it, and accepted Christ's gift for us on the cross. Why is this important in connection with being generous with our judgment? Because until we have accepted grace, we will be unable to give it to others. If you think you can save yourself through your own efforts you will be expecting others to as well, and you will judge them harshly when they fail. To be gracious to others, accept grace for yourself. Give up trying to save yourself, others will thank you. Prayerfully thank God for His grace today.

## Day 3

### Assumptions

1 Corinthians 13:7; 1 Peter 4:8; Proverbs 10:12; 2 Timothy 2:24; Romans 15:1

When we judge others, what are our assumptions? Like it or not, assumptions are a way of life for one simple reason: none of us possess perfect knowledge. Even though we don't have all of the information

we need, we must act. The result is that we must form shortcuts and assumptions to act in the world, but these assumptions are often far from accurate. We often attribute an injury to malice rather than to a mistake. We assume that since someone forgot something in relation to us, we don't matter to them rather than they may be overwhelmed with their own troubles. Making assumptions is not wrong, as we have said, it is unavoidable. We must, however, question our assumptions regularly and refine them often. We must also make our assumptions as gracious as possible until presented with overwhelming evidence to the contrary. We must make sure that our assumptions follow the golden rule, that the assumptions we make about others are the same ones we would want them to make about us. Spend some time examining your assumptions today. Pray for God to open your eyes about assumptions you need to reconsider.

Day 4

Slow Down

James 1:19; Proverbs 17:27; Proverbs 21:23; Proverbs 14:29; Exodus 34:6

As I age, I haven't found that being patient is getting any easier. I expected that it would. I was wrong. Getting more patient is not a natural part of aging after all, but rather something that must be worked for and earned. When we become impatient with others, or even when we become angry with others, there is usually something that we value that we feel is being threatened. Obviously, if someone threatens or children or grandchildren, we will find ourselves becoming enraged. The problem is we get angry over much smaller things. When we go through our lives and do an inventory of the things that make us angry, we usually find that most of it revolves around protecting our sense of self-worth. We generally get angry with others because we feel like they are devaluing us. The answer to this problem is not to become worms in our own eyes so that when we feel like we are being devalued we just think we deserve it. The answer is to see our value as completely safe, seated at the right hand of God. If we can meditate on the way that God loves us, the value that was shown for us on the cross, and the fact that this value is completely safe and can never be revoked, then we will find it much easier to be slow to anger when someone, most of the time inadvertently, threatens our value.

Day 5

Condemnation

Romans 8:1; John 3:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:13; Romans 5:1

There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. What a thing to celebrate! In our sermon last week, we spoke about the need to judge actions accurately but not to condemn people. When we condemn people, we are saying there is no hope for them. They not only are not saved, but they will never be saved. To say this is to take lightly the absolute and unrelenting horror of hell. It is to have no desire for the salvation of the other person, to not care if they spend eternity away from the presence of God, or even worse to hope for that very thing. God wants all people to be saved, and so should we. Our greatest hope for any person should be that they would accept the unmerited grace of God, to be restored to him through Jesus Christ, and to have an eternity in heaven with him. The worse they are, the more we should hope for their salvation and transformation. Because in their sin we are catching a glimpse of the future hell that is before the unsaved. Let us never stop hoping for, praying for, and working for the salvation of those around us.