

Series Title: At the Crossroad: From false beliefs to Freedom

Sermon Title: Week 6: From Judgment to Love

Date: 11-10-19

✠ Silly arguments, serious consequences

- *Lisa and my 1991 time zone argument. Indiana didn't observe DST, so at 'spring forward', Indy time would move from being Eastern time to Central time. Or???*
- *Stupid argument, but we both refused to back down, and after about 45 minutes were mad, irritated, and it ruined our day. 30 years later we are still talking about it!*
- *WHY DO WE DO THIS! The topic was almost irrelevant. What was at stake was our desire- need- to be right. For our version to be what was TRUE.*

✠ So, what is true?

- *This matter of 'what is true' and how it plays out in life is fascinating and incredibly impactful.*
- *Think for a moment... argument where the conflict centered on what was TRUE about something. Who was at fault... that expense was worth it... my actions were not offensive... At end of argument, did you say "Thank you for sharing your truth with me. I feel so much more intimate now". Probably not!*
- *Point is that we CARE about truth, but we want to be the arbiters of what is true- from big issues down to the details of life. And so when 'my truth' is different from 'her truth' or 'their truth', our sense of self is threatened, conflict arises, and off to the races.*
- *THE REALITY, OF COURSE, is that ultimately there is only once source of truth, just as last week we saw there is only one source of true life... God. CHRIST.*
- *SCRIPTURE... 3 passages from John...*

John 1:14,17 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

John 8:31-32 *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

- *Gospels- Jesus says "Truly I tell you" 79 times!*
- *Throughout scripture we see that the concepts of TRUTH, JUSTICE, what is RIGHT, is God's domain... AND YET, we desperately want it to be OUR DOMAIN,*
- *WHY? I'm oversimplifying, we do this because we often vest our identity- our sense of self and well being- in being right. We tell ourselves that for ME TO BE WHOLE, PEACE, respected, LIFE MUST HAPPEN ON MY TERMS. If a person is going to be on good terms with me, then they must agree with what I THINK IS RIGHT. JUST.*

✠ **False belief #4:** The standards of my own JUSTICE system must be met by everyone.

- *This is a basic temptation of the human condition- flesh, destructive because- small step from needing to be RIGHT to loving our own sense of justice, our version of truth, MORE than we love people.*
- *IN BOOK and message, Peter describes how we all have our personal judicial system, complete with detectives, prosecutors, jury, judge, and those who carry out punishment.*
- *Something happens that offends us....*
 - *We catalog the evidence... 'look what he did'... we don't keep statute of limitations on past crimes*
 - *We make the argument of guilt to jury, ME*

- Present verdict to judge, ME
- Carry out punishment on those who offended us.
 - Cold shoulder. Glares. Passive aggressive. Make sure someone else knows he's a jerk.
 - Social media... post negative review...
- OR, my preferred method, is to go through this whole process in my mind, and then just stew in my offendedness, effectively placing myself in jail.
- ON SURFACE MAKES NO SENSE! WHY DO THIS?
- Because JUSTICE MUST BE DONE! THEY DESERVE

† Reality! A core attribute of our *flesh* is claiming our *right* to determine what is *deserved*. When people don't receive what we think is deserved, we cry out "that's not FAIR!"

- This is a trap, because when life offends us, its so easy to try and feed our soul through the bitter meal of anger, frustration, pride, and a root of offence, RATHER than finding our peace, and nourishing our soul by surrendering the right to determine justice TO CHRIST, and receiving our needs from HIM.
- NOW... do we work for justice and fairness in our world? Of course we do. Are there times of conflict when we need to honestly express our concerns, emotions? OF COURSE.
- BUT THE REALITY is that we can't do this in a healthy way when our motivation is satisfying our anger- our own sense of offendedness, our inner demand for fairness in order to fill a hole in our identity that only Christ can fill. ONLY when we let go of our justice demand can we be made whole by CHRIST, and address the issue out of LOVE, not out of a desire to get even!
- REALITY IS THAT LIFE ISN'T FAIR, and if we predicate our wholeness, our wellbeing, on making everything fit our justice system, we will be miserable, and probably will make those around us miserable as well.
- Another important thought. There are times when our cry 'that's not fair' isn't petty, but rather is a response to profound, difficult, even tragic circumstances in life. GOD IS PATIENT WITH US. HE CAN HANDLE OUR QUESTIONS, EVEN OUR ANGER. The psalms demonstrate this. BUT EVEN THEN...
- For us to move toward peace, freedom of our soul, that anger must be brought to god, and ultimately we must surrender our offense, our questions, our demand for justice, to God. Even when our unfair circumstances don't change, they don't have to hold our soul, our peace and well-being of our soul, hostage. This freedom comes from saying "GOD, I'm going to stop trying this case in my court of justice, and I'm surrendering it to you.

The problem with demanding our own justice system

† Justice is GOD'S domain, not ours.

Romans 14:10-13 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God." ¹² So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. ¹³ Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

- Time and again scripture calls out to us... don't pass judgment on each other! God has called us to live by his spirit, express his goodness.... But NOT TO punish those who don't. That's not our job.

† When we are the judge, the result is SEPARATION

- PETE- Greek word for 'Judge' literally means 'separate'. When we hold a person in Judgment

- *Can't experience God's love, because we are stepping into role that is HIS- taking eyes off him and placing them on ourselves. JUDGING is desire of flesh, and flesh is against the spirit.*
 - *Can't love the other, because we are holding them in contempt of our court, looking down on them*
 - **HERE'S HOW THIS HAPPENS- quick overview (book)**
 - Judgment separates by demanding **CORRECTNESS**
 - *Judgmental attitude born from need to be right, because, you know, everyone else is WRONG!*
 - *'Doctrine police'... procedure police... 'just so'*
 - *SEPARATES because puts more emphasis on being RIGHT than being LOVING.*
 - *Relational kryptonite! If you go through life correcting everyone, people will run from you!*
 - Judgment separates through **COMPARISON**
 - *This is when we compare our lives, circumstances, to that of others. "Why do they have that and I don't... not fair!" We can get angry with God for not giving us what we think is fair. Leads to contempt for people we are judging. OR, "of course their life is a mess... look at how they are doing things... good thing I don't do that, they should be more like me"*
 - *SEPARATES because here I try to gain my personal worth by judging the worth of others.*
 - Judgment separates through **CRITICISM**
 - *If critical spirit, we have a negative lens through which we see people and interpret their behavior.*
 - *PETE- if we have a negative belief about someone, we will find evidence to support that belief. This allows us to justify our negative attitude toward them*
 - *SEPARATES because always finding fault, assigning BLAME, assuming motivations. Kryptonite!!!*
 - Judgment separates through **CONTROL**
 - *PETE- perhaps most insidious. We all have control issues of some level, because most judgement (and pride) steps from FEAR and INSECURITY, and rather than looking to God for wholeness and security, we try to ACHIEVE this through controlling things.*
 - *THEN, anything that threatens our control becomes target of our judgment.*
 - *BUT CONTROL IS GOD'S domain, not ours! PETE: "Usurping God's control in order to ensure getting what you think you need justifies dominance, anger, manipulation, unrealistic demands... whatever. LOVE becomes secondary to retaining control"*
- † Reality! We can't judge and **LOVE** at the same time.
- **WORK OF TRANSFORMATION-** *God is changing us into people who are FREE and able to express HIS LOVE to others. CAN'T do this when we are judgmental and obsessed over what is fair.*
 - **SOMETHING ELSE.** *Going through life by judging people, obsessed with our version of what is deserved and fair... IT IS EXHAUSTING. In his GRACE, God invites us to take this idol of our own justice system- which separates us from people- and LET IT GO.*

† **The deep relief of letting go**

Galatians 5:13-15 *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh (to judge, compare, criticize, control); rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other (judge and punish), watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

- **We will find FREEDOM FOR OUR SOUL when we stop indulging our need to Judge, and rather let God teach us to LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS OURSELF.**
- **LOVE AND VALUE PEOPLE AS GOD LOVES AND VALUES PEOPLE.**
- **But what people? WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?**

Luke 10:25-29, 36-37 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" **GOOD SAMARITAN**

- **Dynamic: man who was beaten- what was he thinking? If only he had been smarter. "deserves it", not worthy of my help...**
- **Jews Samaritan- mutual hatred. Relationship defined by passing judgment on each other.**

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

- **NOT the one who had superior knowledge of what was right, what was deserved, should have done...**
- **The one who didn't pass judgment, THE ONE WHO SHOWED MERCY BY EXPRESSING LOVE FOR A FELLOW HUMAN BEING.**

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

True belief #4: Justice is God's domain and his simply calls me to LOVE and FORGIVE