



SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE WAY OF THE KINGDOM

AN INTRODUCTION TO “THE WAY OF THE KINGDOM”

This section serves two purposes. It is the close of Matthew 6:1-21 and introduces our final section (6:25-7:29). Jesus here sums up not only the previous section on spiritual disciplines but really the whole sermon. He teaches us two things: First, there are earthly and heavenly rewards and the heavenly rewards are much better and second, that what really matters (and what dictates which rewards you get) are a matter of the heart.

The eyes are the lamp of the body, so what are you looking at? What catches your gaze? What makes you dream? Jesus makes this important observation and then apparently changes the subject to money, or does he? Is this a non-sequitur or is Jesus pulling a Jesus and revealing what is probably true about us? Jesus spends more time than the average preacher talking about money because (as he says) it is at the root of all kinds of evil.

WEEK THREE: *“Judging Others”*

Matthew 7:1-6

Let's be real – passing judgement is really easy. So easy that a majority of the time we aren't even conscious of the fact that we're doing it! Our brains are designed to process the things we see and hear, and so often we can take it much further than what's at face value. We are quick to judge others based upon what they eat, what they wear, how they drive or who they voted for. The act of passing judgement on other people is not just about different preference or ideas. Judging others reveals a deeper heart issue. In this passage, Jesus challenges society's understanding of judgement by concluding that our focus shouldn't mainly be on what we are judging, but discerning why and how we judge pushing us to look at our hearts.

When we read about Jesus' analogy of the speck of dust in our neighbor's eye and the plank in our own, He uses a very dramatic and comedic example. Jesus does this to paint a vivid image of how illogical it is for us to be so concerned with the perceived issues of other people while failing to consider what is wrong with ourselves. So how do we go about changing perspectives? It requires grace, humility, and wisdom.

First grace. We all know what it is like to judge, and also to be judged. When we see and believe that all have fallen short of the glory of God – that all have sinned – we realize we need grace as do others. If we can see we need grace and, in Jesus, have received grace, then we can extend grace instead of judgement.

Grace gives way to humility. If you know you need grace and have received grace from God, you know you've done nothing to deserve forgiveness and acceptance. This makes you humble. And the humble know they are in no place to judge others. Only God can rightly judge. To stand in the place as judge, is to wrongfully rob God of his rightful position. As we correctly see God, we can rightly see others and the world. This is wisdom. And wisdom recognizes that we were all made in God's image. When we judge another, we make ourselves the standard instead of God, calling people to conform to our image instead of His. When God is the standard, we all realize we fall short and only one perfectly displays God's image and that is Jesus Christ. Because of that, he is the rightful judge of us all. And yet, instead of standing in judgement condemning us all, Jesus cries out for our forgiveness from the cross.

One day we will all stand before the Judge of our souls. If our faith is in Christ, we will not be condemned because the Judge of our souls has been judge on our behalf.

1. *Read Matthew 7:1-6.*
2. *What can you learn about God's character in these verses?*
3. *How is Jesus the fulfillment of this teaching? How are you presently judging others wrongly? Why?*
4. *How should Jesus' substitutionary atonement for our sins on the cross and the subsequent acquittal that we have received change how we judge others?*
5. *J.D. Greer clarifies that there is a difference between judging what is right and wrong and judging people. We are called to clarify what is true (judging truth). How we respond to or treat people after we declare what is true is key (judging people or not). What does it look like to judge truth and not people?*
6. *What is the Spirit of God leading you to do in light of your time together?*