

# Do Not Judge

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 16 January 2022

Preacher: Bryan Hart

[ 0 : 00 ] Again, good morning, and thanks so much for being with us. We're going to get right into the sermon this morning, and we've been in this series called Words to Live By.

So if you've missed the last few weeks, we are taking advantage of the fact that we're at a time of year where a lot of people create New Year's resolutions. We think about the rhythms of our life, what's most important, what are the things we want to change.

And so as a church, we're taking a moment to do kind of the same thing by looking at the Sermon on the Mount and some of the words of Jesus that are found there. Our New Year's resolutions often focus on things like new habits and new rhythms.

The Sermon on the Mount deals with much deeper things. It deals with things that are at the very center of who we are and the kinds of things that over time we can just kind of lose sight of. So it's a great moment to recenter ourselves on some of these words of Jesus.

And so we've looked at things like Jesus' words and commands to not worry and not give into our anger. Today, we're going to look at his command to not judge.

[ 1 : 13 ] Now, the phrase do not judge probably would be one of Jesus' more popular sayings in our current age. If ever there was a people who hated being judged, I would say it's people who live today in the modern West.

We don't even like the word judgment. That sounds scary. But more than that, judgment has the severity of a verdict. It sounds like it's a very harsh and it can be a very harsh or deliberate statement of what's true.

And in our sort of postmodern world, people are very skeptical of things that sound black and white. We prefer to talk about your truth and my truth than the truth.

Maybe more than ever before, people don't even like being put in categories. We don't like labels. We don't want people to assume that they understand us. Certainly, we don't want people to think they're better than us.

Now, I think that's probably always been true. I don't think anyone has ever enjoyed being condescended to. But I think we do live in a moment where people have a particular aversion to any kind of negative judgment or assessment.

[ 2 : 29 ] You know, the phrase, you don't know me, that's, I think, characteristic of the attitude of our day. No one else has the right to judge me. So, you know, these words that we're going to look at just now from Jesus, the words judge not, they have a particular kind of appeal.

But they are also probably some of Jesus's more misunderstood words. And so what I want to do this morning is look at what he has to say and then unpack a little bit because the words of Jesus rightly understood address a human behavior and a terrible trait that is characteristic of all people, ancient, modern or postmodern.

And a behavior that I think the gospel and only the gospel gives us the resources to change. So we're going to read the first five verses from Matthew chapter seven.

Jesus says, judge not that you not be judged for with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged.

And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that's in your own eye?

[ 3 : 41 ] Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite. First, take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Again, I think that this passage is one that is easy to like. Some of Jesus's sayings are hard, but I think most people read this and say, yes. Yes, we like this.

We don't want people to judge us. And I don't think anybody wants to be called a judgmental person. But we must start with this question. What kind of judgment is Jesus talking about here? Like when he says do not judge, what does he mean? In both Greek and in English, the word being used there can mean a lot of things, has a wide range of meaning. And that's part of why I think this passage has really been oftentimes very misunderstood and misapplied.

What exactly is Jesus telling us not to do? Is Jesus telling us to avoid having bad opinions about other people? That seems very unlikely since the New Testament is filled with warnings about bad behavior and instructions to consider the behavior of those that we're with.

[ 5 : 01 ] Is Jesus telling us to keep those opinions to ourselves? You know, like do not judge means do not criticize. Well, that also is probably not the case because in Matthew 18, Jesus commands his disciples to give criticism if the situation merits it and even to give consequences.

Does Jesus mean just when he says do not judge? Does he mean just accept people how they are rather than, you know, demanding that they change? And at first glance, that might seem to be a really good answer because Jesus seemed to be doing a lot of that.

Right. He was eating with tax collectors and sinners, people that nobody else wanted to eat with or even be with. He really seemed to accept them. But the thing is, Jesus demanded that everybody change.

So Jesus accepted people, but then he never let them stay how they were. He was fond of spending time with all kinds of folks and then telling them always to repent and leave their lives of sin.

And there's a story in John's gospel of a woman who was caught in adultery and she's brought out to be stoned to death. And Jesus tells them, you who are without sin, cast the first stone.

[ 6 : 06 ] And that seems to really capture the spirit of these verses. You know, who are you to judge is what basically what he tells the crowd. And so everyone walks away. Jesus is telling them essentially to judge not.

But then he turns and tells the woman, leave your life of sin. So does he accept her or does he judge her? I think to understand what Jesus means in these verses when he says, do not judge, it's helpful to read it in context of what comes after it.

Jesus says, do not judge. So you will not be judged. He's appealing to kind of like a motive in which he's assuming you want to avoid doing something that you don't want done to you.

In Matthew's gospel, the word that's translated judge here is used throughout the gospel frequently to refer to the final judgment of God at the end of time.

The thing is, that's something that the Bible is very clear. You cannot avoid. Everyone's going to face judgment. There's no avoiding that. And so what a lot of theologians and scholars have basically come to the conclusion that many of them have come to is that when Jesus says, do not judge in this context, what he's talking about is condemnation.

[ 7 : 24 ] Because that's a kind of judgment that can be avoided, isn't it? That's the whole point of the gospel. Jesus came to be condemned so you wouldn't be. So when Jesus says, judge not so you won't be judged, it seems like the sense of judge being used here is in the condemning sense.

We could say, do not condemn, lest you be condemned. We are warned. There's a warning here. Don't do to other people what you are hoping is not going to happen to you.

It's very similar to the golden rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It's just stated differently. Do not condemn as you do not wish to be condemned. And then Jesus elaborates and gives a little bit of an explanation.

He says in verse 2, for with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Now, the little word at the beginning there, for, it means that what Jesus is saying is explaining what he just said.

So the explanation Jesus gives here has some context that's helpful. And in Jesus' days, a very common problem in the marketplace was the fairness of scales and measuring.

[ 8 : 40 ] Everything was counted and measured and priced using scales. So grain contracts, actually, from those days, the way that they were written, there would have been specific instructions.

There was language specifying that the grain being delivered and the payment for the grain both had to be measured out on the same scale, the same instrument.

You can't use one scale for the grain and a different scale for the payment. You could see how that would just lead to all kinds of corruption. So when Jesus is saying judge not or condemn not, this is what he means.

The measure that you use, you've got to be consistent with it. The measure you use will be used with you. You can't swap out the scales. You can't expect one set of scales is going to be used for you, and you're going to use a different one with someone else.

So there's something in the background here being assumed. What is everyone hoping for? What's the instrument we're hoping is going to be used with us?

[ 9 : 46 ] Well, we're all hoping for mercy and forgiveness. That's what we want. We don't want to be condemned. So the question is, are we consistent about that? Because there is an idea of consistency as it relates to mercy and forgiveness that's found in a bunch of other places in the Bible.

I won't give all of them. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus opens with beatitudes, statements about living the blessed life. One of them reads this way, blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

There's consistency there. James 2, verse 13 says, for judgment is without mercy to one who is shown no mercy. There's going to be consistency.

Now, this can sound like works righteousness, which is this idea that God responds to me. In order for me to get what I want from God, I've got to do the right thing for him.

It can sound like it can sound like what this is saying is that God's only going to forgive me if I forgive. And therefore, I have to earn God's forgiveness by being a forgiving person.

[ 10 : 52 ] That's not it. Although it's understandable why you might think that if you only read these verses. The idea from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus works it out in greater detail later in Matthew's gospel, Matthew 18, with a parable of an unforgiving servant.

In this story, there is a servant who owes a king a great deal of money. And he comes and he begs for mercy. And the king forgives him of his debt. But then that servant leaves the king's palace or wherever, leaves the king.

And he finds another guy who owes the servant a great debt. But the servant goes out and thrashes this guy. And he refuses to forgive the debt that is owed to him. Here's how the parable ends.

Then his master summoned him and said to him, You wicked servant. I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?

And in anger, his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. So also, Jesus says, my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

[ 12 : 06 ] This parable illustrates the principle being laid out in the Sermon on the Mount. Now, we don't show mercy and grace so that God will show it to us, but because he already has.

There's no earning happening here. This is what happens in the parable. A man gets forgiven. He's not willing to give it to anybody else. So coming back to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is speaking to his followers.

These are people who have been offered considerable forgiveness. Jesus is the Son of God, and he's living with them, doing life with them, eating with them, doing miracles among them.

And he's not beating them over the head for all their mistakes. He's forgiving them, showing them mercy and showing them grace. He's saying, look what I'm doing to you. But if you then turn around and you swap out the scales, you receive mercy.

You're so happy to receive mercy, but you're not willing to give it. That's being false. With the measure that you've used, it's going to be measured back to you. And it just raises the question, I think, of why do people do this?

[ 13 : 10 ] Why do we get mercy, but we don't want to give it? Like, why would someone, like in the parable, you know, ask for mercy and then condemn his friend? Why do we do that?

Why do we hope that God will be so merciful to us, but then, man, we can hold other people in such derision? I mean, I do this all the time. I can be at my worst, such a critical, condemning person at my worst.

And there's probably more than one reason, but I think here's a big part of it. Because when we look at ourselves and when we look at other people, we don't see the same thing. And that is the

language that Jesus uses in these verses.

Verse 3. He says, why do you see the speck that's in your brother's eye, but you don't notice the log that's in your own eye? What Jesus is saying is that we condemn others for their defects when we're blind to our own.

That's what makes us swap out the scales, so to speak, and use different measures. You know, we know that we're not perfect. I've yet to hear anybody say that they're perfect. We know we're not perfect, but we tend to think that our sins, they're the kind of sins, or at least a lot of us.

[ 14 : 22 ] This maybe isn't everybody, but I think a lot of us. We think our sin is the kind of sin that God's happy to forgive. Other people, though, man, their sin, gosh. Sheesh, I mean, I don't know.

Maybe it's too bad. Maybe they're just so persistent in it. They never change. And so we imagine that God sees us differently. How do you think that God sees you? Now, how do you think that he sees a murderer or a rapist?

How do you think he saw the Unabomber? The problem is we don't see well, and we don't see like God. Jesus often talked about this.

He said, you know, we see what's on the outside. He sees what's on the inside. And I want to acknowledge that what's on the outside isn't unimportant. You know, there's a difference between what the Unabomber did and what most of us have done with different consequences as well. The thing is, what really matters is what's on the inside. The outside can often be very different, but what's on the inside is what counts, and that's what Jesus sees. And there is not the variation that we like to imagine.

[ 15 : 26 ] Not only in English, but also in Greek, two different words are being used in that verse, verse 3, where it says, Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but you don't notice the plank in your own eye?

Two different words. The Greek word for seeing that's being used there has to do with literal seeing. But the one that's used for notice has to do with mental perception. And so our translation actually captures this well.

See, we are so often convinced that we can see what's going on in other people. Oh, it's so obvious to us. And frankly, sometimes it is. Sometimes it is. Like, you know, it's often easier to see a fault in somebody else than it is for them to see it.

The problem is the same thing's happening with us. We lack the mental awareness of our own issues. And Jesus is using this kind of ridiculous imagery to create what one commentator calls a scene of grossly selective perception.

And how is it that you notice this tiny speck in somebody else, but you've got like a plank in your face and you don't even notice it? Judge not. Condemn not.

[ 16 : 31 ] These are not prohibitions, you know, telling us that we can't make judgment calls, that we can't confront sin. Jesus is identifying an attitude and a quality in us where we are always finding fault with other people, where we are always critical, where we are quicker to see small issues in others than the big issues in ourselves.

In fact, the point here isn't even that you shouldn't criticize. It's that when you use the same scales, when you're fair, when you examine yourself like you examine others, you're actually in a better position to give criticism in the best way.

In fact, what's interesting is that the next line says, you hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye and then what? Well, and then you'll clearly see.

You'll be able to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Because we actually do occasionally need to do this. We need to help each other. We have blind spots. Sometimes we actually do need to give criticism. But when you think that you're different than someone else, when you think that you're fundamentally different, that what's in you is different than what's in them, that criticism will often come out as condescension.

And when you condescend, what you're doing is you are certainly, whenever you condescend, and I'm saying this to somebody who this is like a real area of struggle for me. When I condescend, I am certainly ignoring.

[ 17 : 54 ] I am blind to my own defects that I would ever be able to turn up my nose or look down on anybody for anything. Because you and I are not better than any other human being on the planet, which is an easy thing to not along to, hard thing to actually believe.

And I doubt that many of us really, really believe that all the way down. I mean, let's press it. No different? I mean, we've already mentioned murderers and rapists.

What about child abusers? What about ISIS? What about those who torture Christians? No different? Again, we maybe haven't done the same things that they've done, but what kind of conclusions should we draw about that?

History is full of people, full of people who did things that they once said they'd never do. I mean, it's happened in my life so many times. And so many people who I've pastored who have done something, and they're sitting with me, and they're saying, I can't believe I'm the kind of person who does this, who did this.

I've got a laundry list of things in my life I thought I'd never do, and all it took was the right circumstances to bring it out of me. Because the seed that led to whatever's in the other guy, those germs, those seeds are in me, and they are waiting to blossom.

[ 19 : 13 ] Here's the irony. In this scenario that Jesus gives, it's not merely that the person is blind to the wood in his own eye. It's that it's massive compared to what's in his brother's eye.

It should be so obvious. And so the point here is that if other people's problems are more obvious to you than your own, man, that is a huge problem.

If other people's issues are more obvious, if other people's issues get more of your attention than your own, gosh, what does that say?

Because nobody's problems and nobody's issues, nobody's, should be more obvious to you than yours. And that should be true for everybody. There's a story, a famous story, which we've often referenced at One Harbor because it's just so helpful, in which a British newspaper in the 19th century reached out to the Christian author, G.K. Chesterton.

They were doing a bit of a survey and asking the question, you know, what's the, what is the biggest problem in the world today? And he wrote back, dear sirs, I am. That's a man who had a better sense of his own problems than anyone else's.

[ 20 : 25 ] And Jesus is saying, if you can't see that, that's hypocrisy. Many of you will know the word hypocrite is a reference to an actor in those days.

A hypocrite was just an actor who came on stage wearing different masks. Jesus used that word a lot, but almost always he used it for his Jewish opponents, the Pharisees and the like.

This is the only place where he uses it for his own disciples. And it's in reference to self-blindness. He's telling his disciples, if you're going to be a hypocrite, here's how you're likely to do it. You're going to forget your own issues.

And you're going to focus on everybody else's. It's in reference to this critical spirit that's always tearing down rather than building up. When you criticize someone with that kind of condemnatory attitude, it's never to help.

And we pretend that we're helping, but we're not. We don't want to help people. Our goal isn't for someone else to flourish because we love them. And we fake that sometimes.

[ 21 : 29 ] In fact, that is what one commentator thinks Jesus is describing. John Nolan says in his commentary on Matthew, a falsely based assertion of superiority is masquerading as care and generosity.

But when you're aware of what's in your own eye and what's been in your eye and what you know is going to probably be in your eye tomorrow, well, then you don't give critiques from a position of superiority.

It's from a posture of humility in which you actually, because you know what it's like. You know what it's like to have something in your face that's blinding you and you actually want to help somebody else.

To talk to somebody with cognizant of the fact that you've also done the very thing they're doing or given the right circumstances, you could end up doing it. I was in Havelock last week and we were talking about anger.

And I was quite honest about the fact that anger has been for me the primary character defect that I've been working on for a number of years now. And one of my sons also struggles with anger.

[ 22 : 29 ] And so I've had to be very careful about how I talk to him about anger because I don't want to be a hypocrite. I don't want to, you know, when he has an explosive outburst or doesn't handle his anger well, it's very easy for me to get frustrated with him.

But what I've had to do is sit with him and say, hey, buddy, this anger thing in you is a problem. It'll eat you alive. But it's my issue too. We're in the same boat. Let's talk about it together.

I can't come to him from some position of superiority, even when I'm most frustrated because I do the same thing. And then, of course, I've talked with people about things and they've done terrible things I haven't done.

But I can approach those folks in two different ways. The first way is to just assume that, gosh, I sit with somebody and I talk with them about, you know, they've done something terrible. And I can, you know, I can just kind of assume, wow, you know, I can't believe this person would ever do that. And be so grateful that I don't do those kind of things. Or I can approach them with the assumption that, man, you know, given the right circumstances, I might do the same thing. One of the best ways to avoid doing the worst things is to know that you're capable of doing the worst things.

[ 23 : 37 ] That's humility. It's when you think that you are better than someone, that you are less capable of doing horrible things or that, you know, you'll never do the things that that guy did.

Well, that's when the enemy has a field day. Jesus says, judge not, condemn not. And the gospel has set you free. It's set you free from that kind of attitude.

So let's look briefly at how that works. Because when we condescend and condemn, it will be for one of two reasons. Generally speaking, when we condescend, when we condemn, have that judgmental and critical attitude, it's generally for one of two reasons.

Someone has done something that we think is terrible and maybe even unforgivable. Or someone is so different from us in ways that we think are unreasonable. And the gospel deals with both sides of that.

The world, though the world makes you exclude and condemn, the gospel makes you include and forgive. And that's because of the cross, right?

[ 24 : 39 ] Because Jesus died for everyone in the same measure. I mean, do you ever think about this, that your sin didn't need less atonement than anybody else's? Because of the cross, Christians ought to be, and this might sound strange at first, but Christians ought to be both.

Both the most humble and the most confident people on the planet. Now, as it stands, most of the time, people seem to be either one or the other.

And Tim Keller's got a book called Making Sense of God where he talks about this, why this is. And it's because for most people, who they are and their whole sense of identity, how they see themselves, right?

That's what we're talking about. How do you see yourself and how do you see others? For most of us, how we see ourselves is tied up in what we do with our life. And so the person who achieves great things, the person who meets their own goals, the person who lives a very successful life, will often have great confidence, rightly so.

But will struggle to be sympathetic with those who don't meet his or her standards or don't meet their goals or things don't go well for them. So you have someone who's maybe confident but not very humble.

[ 25 : 48 ] And then there's someone who maybe life has been very hard for them and they never meet their goals and things just always go the wrong way. That kind of person is often very empathetic and sympathetic to people who struggle and who also face failure.

But that person's oftentimes also very insecure and so you have humility but maybe not confidence. But for the Christian, the reason that it's different and the only reason that we can be both is because of this.

The way that we see ourselves is supposed to be based not on what we do but what Jesus has already done for us. And so we can actually afford to be both things at once.

Thus, we can actually be very humble in the face of our success because on the best day of my life, the credit for the best thing about my life still goes to Jesus. I didn't add anything to what he did on the cross.

And anything that goes right in my life, it's Christ at work in me. And so I can also, because I know how much mercy I've been given, I can forgive those who have done terrible things to me or to others because I know that I have been forgiven.

[ 26 : 55 ] So I can be humble at the same time. But also, in the face of failure, I can be confident. Because on the worst day of my life when I screw everything up, none of my failure takes away anything from what Jesus did on the cross.

His love for me isn't conditioned on what kind of person I'm like. So I don't assume that those who are different than me are any better or worse than me. In Jesus and only in Jesus, humility and confidence come together in the most wonderful way.

And this is very important if you don't want to be a judgmental and condemning kind of person. One of the biggest reasons that we find fault with other people and we demonize them is not just because of the things that they maybe do wrong, it's because of their differences, how they're so different than us.

They're other. And difference and otherness can often make us feel very insecure. You know, throughout history, entire wars have been fought over insecurity.

People who have fought wars over their ethnic differences because those ethnic differences made them so insecure that insecurity turned to hatred. And that's part of the human problem. People see differences bad.

[ 28 : 08 ] And so we judge and we condemn. And what we do is we insist, in order for me not to hate you, in order for you not to drive me nuts, you need to be more like me. But Christianity doesn't do that.

And it doesn't even do it to you. I want you to think about this. Christianity assimilates more to you than you have to assimilate to it. That is key to how the gospel sets you free from this stuff.

It's one of the things that makes what we believe about the gospel so remarkable, so different. Most religions in the world are anchored to one place and one culture. And if you want to join that religion, you got to adopt the ways of worship that were created in that culture, where it started. Judaism is linked to the Israelites and their culture. The Islam is linked to the Arabs and their culture. 90% of Muslims live in a band that goes from Southeast Asia all the way over to North Africa.

Over 95% of Hindus are in India and the surrounding regions. 88% of Buddhists are in East Asia. But Christianity is everywhere. 25% of Christians are in Europe.

[ 29 : 14 ] 25% are in Central and South America. 22% are in Africa. 15% are in Asia. And only 12% are in North America. And furthermore, Christianity always looks like the places where it is.

In Africa, Christians worship like Africans. They look like Africans. Their songs and their ways are African. Same in Asia and Europe and so on. And if you visit churches all over the world, you would imagine you're going to see different religions altogether.

The theologian and professor Richard Baucom says, almost certainly Christianity exhibits more cultural diversity than any other religion. And that must say something about it.

And it does. And why is this true? Because in the gospel, Christians are not judged for being different. If they are in Christ, that is all that matters.

Galatians 5 verse 6 says, For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision count for anything. And that's a reference to a kind of a cultural and even ethnic issue from several thousand years ago.

[ 30 : 19 ] But we could say neither language nor country, neither style of worship, nor clothing preference, neither high education or low education, neither Republican or Democrat, neither anything else which is outside of Christ.

None of it counts for anything. Only this. In Christ, faith working itself through love. So there is room in Christ for everybody.

And for all our differences and all our different styles and preferences. And at its best, Christianity has always been about this. Christianity doesn't say you've got to be like somebody else. It takes what's in you and it makes it the best version of itself in Jesus.

It's wonderful. Christianity takes what's in you and it makes you shine in him. The African writer, Laman Sana from Gambia, has written about all the different ideologies that people have tried to export and pummel into the African continent.

And he says that many of them have not taken Africans seriously. You know, there is so much conviction in the African mind about spirit, good spirits and bad spirits in the spiritual realm.

[ 31 : 30 ] And many of those ideologies have dismissed that. And he says that unlike other ideologies that downplay those concerns, Christianity captured them and gave them their fullest expression.

He wrote this, African people sense in their hearts that Jesus did not mock their respect for the sacred, as secularism does, or their clamor for an invincible savior.

And so they beat their sacred drums for him. Christianity helped Africans to become renewed Africans, not remade Europeans. See, when you condescend, when you judge, what we're doing when we do that is we're trying to remake people in our image.

We want them to be like us. But that's not what we're supposed to do. The gospel says that we all get to be us in Christ. We don't want people to look like us. We don't want them to be remade in our image.

We want them to be renewed in Christ's image. When we show contempt and when we judge, it's the opposite of that. It's finding the speck in the way someone else does things rather than admitting, you know what, there's issues with the way we all do things.

[ 32 : 40 ] We've all got stuff in our face, so to speak. And we ought to know more about what's in our eye than what's in someone else's. When people hurt us, we're so tempted to condemn them.

When they're different than us, we're so tempted to exclude them, to judge and assume that the grace given to us shouldn't also be given to them.

I mean, it's awful how we're just so prone to doing this. But when you realize that you have nothing except Jesus, you will neither condemn nor exclude. You forgive because you know how much you've been forgiven.

You know that nobody has been forgiven more than you. And so you also can forgive. And you can include because of your own inclusion. The Bible says that when that happens, it is a triumph.

We read from James 2.13. I'm going to read that verse again and read the end of it. For judgment is without mercy to one of his own who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

[ 33 : 44 ] Mercy triumphs over judgment. God is the only one fit to judge. And his mercy in your life and my life has the final word every day.

Literally, his mercies triumph every day. They're new every morning. As Romans 8 says, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Mercy has triumphed over our lives. John 3 says that God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved.

Mercy has triumphed over the whole world. 1 John 3 says that whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart. Mercy triumphs even over our hearts.

Jesus asked the adulterous woman who was left to condemn her, and she said, no one. And he said, neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.

[ 34 : 39 ] Mercy triumphs over our wretchedness. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, he cried out, Father, forgive them. And mercy triumphed even over the unjust murder of God's son.

Judge not. Condemn not. For mercy has triumphed over you. Mercy has had and will have the final word.

Now you are commanded to give that word to others. To the person who has done terrible things, let your mercy triumph. To the person who intimidates you, always seems to get a better deal than you.

You're so tempted to be bitter and resentful to. Let your mercy triumph. Let your mercy triumph. And to the one who irritates you, who you're so tempted to look down on or condescend, let your mercy triumph.

The measure of God's love for you is unending grace and mercy. Let it be the measure you use. And in the end, it will still be measured.

[ 35 : 48 ] And in the end, it will still be measured back to you. As we get ready to pray and then take communion, I'm assuming that not every person who's watching this calls Jesus Christ master, lord, savior, king, and friend.

If you do not yet call him those things, if you do not yet relate to him in those ways, I want to remind you that the final word on your life will be one of two things.

It will either be condemnation or it can be mercy. And it will only be mercy in Christ. So we appeal to you.

Come be reconciled to this king who wants to be your friend. And if you want to know more about that, email us, call us. We would love to help you take next steps into Christ.

Why don't we pray? Lord Jesus, we thank you for your mercy. We thank you that you had every right to condemn us. You're the one person who has the right to condemn. But you have wanted mercy to triumph.

[ 36 : 55 ] Lord, I pray that you would make us into a people who do not have a judgmental, critical spirit, but who are humble and confident. Humble enough and confident enough to give mercy to everyone we meet.

We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.