

Thought for Sunday 2nd August 2020

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

Read Matthew 7:1-12

It doesn't matter who we are, we all judge other people, whether it is a new preacher or pastor, or someone new who serves you in the shop, or a new work colleague, or if you are in management, someone who is coming to you looking for a job. It always used to be, have they cleaned their shoes? We all judge people, and first impressions can be life changing. Some people take an immediate dislike to someone, and that can take a long time to alter, but that is not what Jesus is talking about in this instance. I believe that Jesus is telling us not to judge people that we think are not doing the right thing. We all think that what we do is the right way to do it, very few of us are comfortable when being told, we've got it wrong. We all know it is wrong to steal, Exodus 20:15, one of the Ten Commandments; *'You shall not steal.'* But is also wrong 'not' to give others food when you have a surplus. In the Irish potato famine of 170 years ago, people had nothing to eat, thousands of people died, many hundreds stole to get something to put on the table to feed their families. Now I'm not saying that was okay, but what would you have done if you had been in that situation? I have had a very privileged life and have never had to steal to put food on the table to feed my family, but having been made redundant three times, I know what it is to be short, to not have money to go and buy those little extras, and to be almost forced into doing something that we know is wrong. So when I see someone doing something which I may disagree with, I try and ask the question, why do they do that? Is it out of greed or desperation? Romans 3:23; *'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'* That includes you and me. Jesus enforces the point in Matthew 7:3-4 **read**... I know something, there are things in my past that I would prefer not to be made public, and I am sure that we would all endorse that feeling about things that each one of us has done. I was talking to my brother-in-law the other day and we talked about the current Covid19 coronavirus, and the rules and regulations, like wearing a facemask, that are being put into place. We may not like wearing a facemask, but it is for the good of everyone if is going to stop the spread of the virus. I am not trying to make light of this pandemic but there are many 'laws' in this country which the vast majority of people do not adhere to. How many of us can say we have never exceeded the speed limit when driving our cars? When driving on a motorway do we always stay in the nearside lane? Both laws, made for our wellbeing. So when we are told we must wear facemasks in certain situations, do we always do it, after all the police cannot 'police' it. **Read Luke 7:37-38** Jesus says; *'Do not judge others.'* Verse 42 confirms what Jesus has been saying; *'You hypocrite, take the plank out of your eye.'* Some years ago I had to sit on a jury and was elected to be the Jury foreman, which meant I had to deliver the jury's verdict, whether I agreed with it or not. There were two charges, on one count the accused was found guilty and the other not guilty. The problem was I have no idea whether we gave the correct verdicts because we only heard what the two parties wanted us to know. We couldn't ask for clarification on certain points despite none of us being totally clear. All it needed was just a couple of questions. Whether we would have been any nearer giving the correct verdict we will never know. If we come back to Psalm 139 again, we know that our lives are totally open for God to see, there is nothing he doesn't know, so we must take heed of verse 2; *'you will be judged with the measure you use, it will be used to measure you.'* The last verse of our passage today is not the easiest to understand, what is Jesus talking about; *'Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.'* Maybe Jesus was referring to Proverbs 26:11; *'As a dog returns to its vomit.'* There

are some people you can tell again and again and again, but if they take no notice and just go back without any change at all, then maybe we are wasting 'our' time and maybe we have to leave someone else to turn them from their ways. **Read 2 Peter 2:1-22...** we see it ends with Peter almost quoting the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:6. There are people who attend Church but whose lives have never been altered by the Good News of Jesus Christ. I have to be honest and say, there have been times when I have questioned, has my preaching/teaching ever made any difference to anyone? Let me ask you a question, when you have been to church and listened to a sermon, or maybe when you read through these notes I have been sending out now for the last 19 weeks, this is the 20th week, in fact the 22nd lot of notes if you include Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, have any of them changed the way you think and act? The vast majority of you, I believe, are Christians, and if that is the case then we can rejoice that when you take your last breath, you will be with the Lord in Paradise, Luke 23:43. But the real question is, have you changed since becoming a believer? Would people recognise you are a believer without you telling them? That is the true test of a believer, when we begin to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. I believe that verses 9-11 talk about how we give and what we give. Do we give from our riches, or do we give what we have left over? I have been involved in sending Christmas shoebags to Sierra Leone for almost 20 years and I insist that everything we give is of a good quality. I will challenge people and say, 'would you give what you are giving to your children or your grandchildren?' if the answer is 'no' then think again about sending it to Sierra Leone. Again I would bring you back to verse 2; '*you will be judged with the measure you use, it will be used to measure you.*' Ask and it will be given to you, that is how verse 7 begins, verse 11 says; '*your Father in heaven gives good gifts to those who ask him.*' If you expect your Father in heaven to give you good gifts, then how much more should you be willing to give good gifts, it's not about giving good gifts just to receive good gifts, giving good gifts should be our hearts delight. So if finish with verse 12; '*in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*'

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,
And all these things shall be added unto you, Hallelu, hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelu, hallelujah!

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God, Hallelu, hallelujah!

Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find.
Knock and it shall be opened unto you, Hallelu, hallelujah!

If the Son shall set you free, ye shall be free indeed.
Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free, Hallelu, hallelujah!

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works
And glorify your Father in heaven, Hallelu, hallelujah!

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, He shall direct thy paths,
In all thy ways acknowledge Him, Hallelu, hallelujah!