

JESUS SAID WHAT?!15

22nd August 2021 – week 8

HillSide's Minister – Rev' Allan Booth

THE KEY THE KEY OF HAVING A POSITIVE SPIRIT

Blurb:

The world says: Be blunt and direct about other people's faults – even gossip about them.

Jesus says: Do not judge other people.

John 8: 1-11

8 ¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹ "No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Sermon

This week we focus on a core criticism of 'Christians' everywhere; the thing of being super judgmental and over religious. On a broad scale, it was only 28 years ago that we lived in a country that claimed to be Christian yet had legalized judgment of the many by the few. Even today we fall into prejudicial behaviour that echoes our history and inhibits us from achieving the high standards of our constitution. On a community scale many a church member has moved churches for the tiniest of reasons; if the minister preaches a bit longer than usual she is long-winded and vague; on the other hand if brief and concise then he is unprepared or disinterested in the topic. Not to mention if the pastor doesn't greet you in a busy shopping mall then she doesn't care for her people and is self absorbed, yet if she is bubbly and greets everyone enthusiastically we question if her interest is genuine. And that's just how we are with clergy, we are worse with wider church leadership. Christians have made a fine sport out of judgmental criticism; we seem to practice on one another then release our biased opinions on the world.

Many years of working with and studying people has taught me that a critical nature is often based in fear and insecurity. If we can make the other sound worse than we are then we must be okay, if I can show you the wrong in what they are doing, you won't see the wrong in me.

This type of behaviour really isn't a requirement of following Jesus. We must never diminish the contrast between judgmental behaviour and the practice of grace. Followers of Jesus are called to consider others first, even to love our enemies and forgive those that persecute us. Our only concern should be transforming the world where we find our self, instead we waste opportunity, we cheapen love and weaken the church community by contending every issue we see in one another. In our competition to be the better Christian... we damage the Kingdom of God!

I know this sounds harsh, however, not one of us is without fault.

In the gospel portion we read, it is easy to smile at how Jesus outwitted the accusers and acted in grace toward the woman brought before him. To be honest, all of us ought to be able to see ourselves in the group that brought the woman to Jesus. Look at what she's done Lord how should we punish her? A very personal challenge for each of us is to assess whether our own inter-actions are kingdom building or are we building something else; personal influence and power perhaps?

There are certain situations when judgment is necessary. While studying, or training in a particular skill, a form of judgment is needed to determine progress and eventual accomplishment. That is not what Jesus is addressing in the gospels, in fact he knew what it meant to learn under a master and gain new skills. This lesson of judging is tempered with grace. If we unpack what happened in our reading, we can see that the religious leaders had already made up their minds... we must stone this woman. They weren't really asking Jesus what he thought, they were hoping to trap him into saying something against the law. Yet he scribbles in the sand... after he exposes their deceit, he tells the woman to go and sin no more. In other words, he acts in grace toward one already condemned, and by grace sets her free. Hmmm, that sounds an awful lot like what he has done for every one of us.

So what is it we can learn today? We can learn that judgment of others actions is not for us to do. Jesus said if any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone We can learn to take a moment before acting, Jesus scribbled in the sand twice. We can learn that acting in grace is not condoning sin, Jesus declared go now and leave your life of sin. Rather acting in grace offers opportunity for change, for salvation.

We need to take those lessons and transform the worlds opinion of Christians, in the hope that one day every Christian will be an authentic follower of Jesus.

Amen.

Prayer: Lord help us to understand that you call us to a different life; we are your agents of transformation living amongst people who do not want to change. By the power of the Holy Spirit within each one of us enable us to live in grace peace and love, to your glory Amen.