

## Crossroads Community Church

Sunday February 22nd, 2015

Frigid temperatures may have woken us up but the warmth of the Lord greeted us this morning. Worship was lively and encouraging; Pastor Don shared announcements prayed over us, "Dear Father God, we praise you for your forgiveness, help us remember this when we look at others, let us be humble and graceful in correcting our own faults and guiding others to your truth about themselves, in Jesus name, Amen."

As we conclude our journey in the Sermon we will observe key points; criticism, judging, prayer and the "Golden Rule". We have all read this verse; "Do not judge, or you too will be judged,". Unfortunately it has often been taken out of context and many will quote this verse as a licence to sin. So what is it that Jesus was addressing in this quote? He was contrasting two issues, our harsh critical spirit and our permissive spirit, neither is holy, they are extreme opposites. Jesus tells us that before we can critique someone we ought to examine ourselves and that the way we criticize we will be judged for the same thing, (Matthew 7:1-2). God examines our hearts and motives not just our deeds for what we do should come from a genuine love for our Lord. God always addresses our heart issues for it is only when we allow Him to change us inwardly that our actions will be right outwardly. Many times we judge out of wrong conclusions, we base our idea on what we see instead of facts or inward attributes, (1 Samuel 16:7). So if we judge others harshly by jumping to conclusions we will also be judged in the same way.

It is true in a court room we are judged according to evident crimes, and the Bible tells us to submit ourselves to governing authorities, (Romans 13:1). So there is righteous judgement but there is also the unrighteous kind. The Pharisees often judged unfairly, they had classified a group of people who did not follow their rules as "Sinners". (Luke 7:39). We all know that we are all sinners even those who think they are not, for the Bible says we all fall short of godly standards, (Romans 3:23). So again many misquote this as an excuse for sin, give into their permissive attitude. God also tells us to teach and recognize sin as sin, (Galatians 6:1). So if we see a friend who is not living as we know God desires we ought to be humble and graceful with them if we want to help them. We shouldn't approach with a holier than thou attitude. It is better to remember what the Lord has changed in us and share it with our friend. Then inquire if they are struggling with anything, let them open up and be the ones to share what is in their hearts, we can then genuinely offer them prayer and advice from God's word not our own all the while affirming ours and God's love for them. When we deal with others in love and gentleness we will avoid being hypocritical, we won't come across as critical, we all have our own issues to resolve, none of us are perfect and we shouldn't be blind to our own issues which is what Jesus was teaching when he made the comparison of the speck and the plank, (Matthew 7:3-5).

Have you ever wondered why God doesn't always grant us all we ask for? After all the Bible says ask and you shall receive. Most people forget the part according to God's will and we don't always know or understand God's will for our lives. God responds with either No, Not Yet or Yes, God is not ambivalent maybe is not an option, He knows what is good or bad for us and above all He knows what is best. His will is what prevails when we trust Him. What Father gives in to their child's every whim? A good Father knows when to say Yes, Not Yet, or No. Sometimes No means we are asking for the wrong thing, (Mark 10:35-40). When He says not yet it is to allow us to grow our faith in Him, our patience and trust in His timing, to strengthen our perseverance; for His thoughts are above our own, He knows all things and knows what is best for us, (Isaiah 55:8-9). Sometimes His No or Not Yet is to protect us from our own hastiness and other times it is our own disobedience that God wants to change before He grants us what we are asking. If we are sinning, God will not reward sin, (Psalms 66:18-19). We continue to pray because it is an open conversation with our heavenly Father, and he has many things to teach us and even more blessings to give.

Beloved we have a Loving Father, and His grace knows no bounds, every good and perfect Gift is from Him, (James 1:17), so He loves to say yes, but He will not if it would cause us or others harm physically or spiritually. God sees the big picture and knows the end result if we do anything that would cause others to walk away from His Son. Remember the Golden Rule He says, "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" and the greatest Commandment is to Love God and Love our neighbours because His ultimate goal is that everyone would be saved, He is not willing that any of us perish. So if confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and the floodgates of heaven will overflow with His love and mercy! Asherey Shalom?

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