

From The Pastor's Study (4/12/2020)

Teach Us To Judge

There are some terrible people in the world. People who rain pain down on people, and they do it in God's Name. After all, the Bible tells us all those terrible things people do and since it violates the laws and rules passed to us, don't we have a right to condemn these people? You answer this for yourself.

In 1478 the Catholic Church established the Spanish Inquisition. The intent was to identify heretics among those who converted from Judaism and Islam to Catholicism. According to best estimates 150,000 were persecuted with some where between 3,000 and 5,000 suffered very painful deaths. Believe it or not it wasn't until 1834 this was abolished. But hey, they were following proper guidelines to condemn these terrible people.

But that was another country, certainly Americans are more intelligent, certainly the trials in colonial Massachusetts were much more civilized as they attempted to void their community of evil. The religious folk of the era ridded the land of many men, women, and children accused of witchcraft. They were simply applying the rules, laws and punishment instructed them by higher-ups in the church.

Jesus said in **Luke 6:37** ³⁷ "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;" Where, in the instances can you find these words being followed? Isn't it wonderful that we have advanced so far, that we no longer judge people because they live on the streets, because they live a different lifestyle than scripture tells us is right. All of us Christian sit in pews every week, take in what the preacher has to say, sing all those wonderful songs, confess our sins and proclaim our dedication to God, so certainly would never judge someone. Okay, now I have to go to confession.

A friend of mine expressed to me that he has trouble opening up to people, even those who he knows well. There is fear of judgement and condemnation, even if it isn't stated. How many people are in your circle you trust so much you could tell them your deepest, darkest secrets? How many people can you tell about all your thoughts, aspirations, desires, and failures, even personal failures. Look around, look at your circle of friends, somewhere there is a friend with something wrapped up so tight it is choking. How much do you trust the people in your circle?

We live in a society much different than any in the past and we have basically four generations living present day. Raised with different values and different basic ideologies about life and morality. In the 1950's that generation would certainly test drive a car before purchasing it but not live together before marriage. That was also about the last

generation that was pretty much “church mandatory.” The children of this generation were pretty much forced to attend church and many swore their children wouldn’t be forced.

Why did that happen? In the 1950s and 60s children found communities of rebellion and as they grew older they began rejecting the “establishment” and went into the world to “find themselves”. I am sure many of you remember these phrases. Some of them even explored the church but in many cases when they arrived attired in jeans and t-shirts they were rejected or snubbed. Being from Texas I am surprised that jeans would be rejected anywhere.

This isn’t the only factor of course, but it became a representation of the view of the church. “Why should I voluntarily go someplace where I will be rejected because of the clothes I wear?” Well, we overcame that judgement pretty well now, but what about other things. As a pastor I choose not to wear a robe, not because I believe there is anything wrong with it but for me it creates a division, almost a hierarchy. I am no different than the people in the congregation, I simply have a different job, no higher in importance than the lady who cares for our children.

Seldom do I look into the congregation and see a tie, and that is okay, I am very comfortable with that. Our purpose for gathering is to worship and praise God, to learn more about the one who loves us regardless, and to enjoy fellowship and support by our brothers and sisters in Christ. A place where children are as important as any in the congregation.

During this pandemic we are forced to be apart physically but we are all connected spiritually by the one who created us. In God we are created equally and that point is a part of this country’s Constitution. We are created in God’s image and called to be His emissaries to the world.

This Easter we are celebrating physically apart but let us unite in our love and reverence for the one who came to save us. Teach us that judgement is God’s and His alone, if we must judge, do it in front of a mirror. Let us not look into that empty grave because the one who was nailed to that terrible piece of wood is now in your heart or waiting for you to allow Him in...With no judgement.

WWJD