

## Speck in the Eye

by Pastor Mandy Barkhaus

In the Old Testament, we see this constant cycle of disobedience and rebellion of God's chosen people straying from God. What they do is disobey and become desperate because they went so far from God. Then, they would cry out to God, and God would send them a judge.

Yes, Yes. So, like Deborah or Samson or Gideon, one of the judges, to rescue them, he would send these judges to rescue them, and they would find peace for a while. They would follow God for a while, and then they would disobey. They would stray from God. They would become desperate. They would cry for help. God would send another judge.

And it was kind of this cycle that happened until one day they were like, okay, we don't; we're done with judges now. We want a king. Basically, it was like keeping up with the Joneses, like the other countries around them had kings, and they wanted a king. And so they kind of started the cycle over again with kings until God sent the final and greatest king and judge of all time, Jesus.

Now, here is one Old Testament prophecy found in Psalm 9. Starting over seven, it says, But the Lord rules forever. He assumes his throne for the sake of justice. He will establish just justice in the world, right? Rightly, he will judge all people fairly. The Lord is a safe place for the oppressed, a safe place in difficult times.

Those who know your name trust you because you have not abandoned anyone who seeks you, Lord. Now here next is the New Testament fulfillment. So God sent Jesus as this ultimate judge, judge this final judge, and as the Advent right, we prepare for Jesus to return to come and judge the living and the dead, which is the words that we find in the Apostles Creed.

So, in chapter 17, we find this verse. This is because God has set a day when He intends to judge the world justly by a man he has appointed. God has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead. So God appointed judges. Then, God sent the final judge, Jesus. And then, when Jesus was here on Earth, he tells us not to judge.

So Jesus, in his words found in Matthew chapter seven, says this: Jesus says, You probably know this passage. Jesus says, Don't judge so that you won't be judged. You'll receive the same judgment that you give; whatever you allow will be dealt out to you. Why do you see the splinter that's in your brothers or sisters? I but don't notice the log in your own eye.

How can you say to your brother or sister, Let me take that splinter out of your eye when there is a log in your eye? Now, first of all, Jesus is funny. Like, this is funny. If you see a picture of this. Yeah, like, right. I mean, he is making a joke. He is using this kind of ridiculous idea to make a point.

Why don't we want somebody coming at us if we have a speck in our eye, somebody coming at us with a log in their own eye? Now, some people try to use these words of don't judge as an excuse to simply stay in your own lane, like, I'm going to stay in my own lane. I'm not going to judge what they're doing over there.

I'm going to let them live their life. I'm going to worry about myself. We even sometimes repeat, well, who am I to judge it? Jesus tells us not to judge, but that's not actually what Jesus is saying in this

passage. And we'll read on a little bit later. But we do this. We judge others. We also worry about being judged sometimes.

And both of those things, both when we judge others and when we worry about people judging us, both of those things actually change our actions. Take Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, for example. So in Matthew chapter one, starting in verse 18, we find this verse, these verses. This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place when Mary, his mother, was engaged to Joseph before they were married. She became pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man because he didn't want to humiliate her. He decided to call off their engagement quietly. Now, notice that it said that Joseph didn't want to humiliate Mary. But let's say Joseph did decide to quietly call off the engagement that would have left Mary unmarried with an illegitimate, illegitimate child. She would have been publicly shamed.

The law says that she should have been stoned, but she would at least have been publicly shamed. Her family may or may not have stood beside her to share in her shame. They may have let her go and just let her fend for herself. And if she was fending for herself without a husband or a man in that time, a woman without a husband or a man, that meant that she would have to care for herself, selling her body or doing other things just to survive.

But it says that Joseph let her go quietly to not draw too much attention to her. Although it would be hard in a small town if you're pregnant and if you have a baby, people would eventually know. But being righteous, Joseph must have thought about how people might judge Mary. But being human, I am guessing that Joseph also was thinking about how people might have judged him if he took Mary to be his wife, which he did thanks to a visit from a convincing angel.

Now, even though we hear this verse that Jesus says, Do not judge, and we judge like we still judge others. If you drive a car, you judge others. Let's say you are going just a little bit over the speed limit, and some car rushes past you. You say there, that's a they're a maniac. That's a crazy driver.

If you come up to somebody who's driving just a little slower than you are, you're like, well, you're a terrible driver. Let's say you're going the speed limit. If somebody rushes past you, you call them a maniac. If you come up to somebody who's going slower than you, you call them a terrible driver. Let's say you're going a little under the speed limit.

Speed limit because the roads are icy. Same thing. If somebody rushes past you, you're going to call them maniac. If you come up to them, too, and they're too slow, you're going to call them a terrible driver. The problem becomes that every driver thinks that they are going at the correct speed, right? We are the judge. When we drive, we get to draw judge every other driver around us.

Now, you may be wondering or asking yourself why this sermon series is about helping. Why are we talking about judging others? Well, the simple truth of this is that when we are busy judging someone, we're less likely to help that person. If we've made our mind up about somebody, how they are, how they act, or who they might be, we are less likely to help them.

But what does Jesus say? Well, here's the next verse. In this passage about the log in our eye, Jesus says, First, take the log out of your eye. Then you'll see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother or

sister's eye. So Jesus says to help others better. First, we deal with our own things. The more we help ourselves, the more we can help others successfully.

Sure, you can try to help someone remove that speck out of their eye with a giant log in your eye. But it might not be the best idea. And by helping ourselves, I'm actually not talking about self-care, which is really important. I think Jesus thinks this is important, but this is for another message. But by helping ourselves, I'm actually talking about judging ourselves.

Sure. Jesus says that in the same way we judge others, we will be judged. But do we judge ourselves with the same standards as we judge everyone else? Right. That maniac driver that's going ten miles over the speed limit is much worse than me going seven miles over the speed limit. Right. So, how can we best help others?

I want you to think about it this way, and I want you to use these words to help you honor, hinder, and help. And I'll tell you what those numbers mean in a little bit. So Jesus says, don't judge. But he doesn't say, "don't have opinions." Because we're humans, and we're going to have opinions. And he certainly says that we should help others.

So, the things that we think about the most are the things that we worship, good or bad. Those are the things that we worship, the things that we think about. And if we honor the good things, if we think about the good things, God can work in our lives and actually alter our lives if we magnify the good things in life.

Now I am at the age where my friends, who are also around my age, are starting to use reading glasses, glasses also known as cheaters. And I am on the verge of this. I know this because I have a Bible that I keep in my car with me, and I keep it in there so I can take it to the hospital or other visits.

And the other day, I grabbed that Bible and I went into a hospital, and I flipped open the passage that I wanted to read to the family. And I did this, you know, blink your eyes several times. I removed the book a little closer and farther away. I was like, Oh, I am definitely on the verge. Now read.

Others are simply glasses that magnify words and things up close to help you see them more clearly. And reading glasses can be really helpful. They can help us read books, read scripture, or do a hobby that requires us to see up close. But just because they magnify something doesn't make those things good, right? Those glasses could magnify time wasters or things that simply keep us away from God.

But we go through our lives looking for things to complete us. We want to find our purpose in life, and we do that by magnifying things as we search for our purpose in life. Sometimes, we can get caught up in life, magnifying the wrong things, including passing judgment or focusing on what's wrong instead of what's right.

But when we pause to magnify things that we are thankful for, that simple act of gratitude of just stopping and giving thanks to God, we honor God in that moment. The God who completes us, the God who fulfills us, the God who knows us simply by shifting our minds, we magnify the good things we can honor God.

Now, the second word is hinder. Now, in this passage about the splinter and the log in the eyes, Jesus is telling us that, at times, we must put down the magnifying glass and pick up the mirror. We judge others

based on certain things that we deem unworthy. And when we think of our own wrongdoings, often we don't judge nearly as quickly or toughly.

But Jesus says that we need to fix ourselves before we can fix others. So, taking time to recognize the things that we do that hinder or get in the way of following God and helping others is a practice that doesn't always come easily to us humans. But Jesus says it is essential that we first take that log out of our own eye.

Now, our final H word is help. And this word focuses on helping others with specks. Jesus doesn't say don't judge and just leave them alone. As Jesus says, we need to help. Once we've addressed our own faults, then we are better equipped to assist others in a spirit of compassion and love and not judgment.

And this is where Jesus's funny illustration becomes a really powerful illustration. I mean, picture a caring friend who is gently helping another with a speck in their eye after having their own private vision restored. Like, this is the image that Jesus wants us to embody. A loving, compassionate helper. Now I have a challenge for you, Tom.

My husband and I started doing this last week, and it's been really, really interesting to do this. And this is a really good discipline to do every single day. And it doesn't really take up much time at all. And I invite you to do this by writing it down or recording it in some way. Tom and I have a shared spreadsheet that we use so we can do it wherever we are.

You can use a notebook, a journal, or just a piece of paper. But I want you to think about this 3 to 1 thing, and I want you to write down every single day three things that you are grateful for in order to honor God like anything that has happened in your life, that you are grateful. Maybe it's the food on your plate.

Maybe you've got a good night's sleep, whatever it is, big or small, you just write down three things every single day that you're grateful for. And then to two things you did that day that hindered you from being your best self that got in your way from helping others. And these, again, might be really big things. Or maybe they're just small things.

Maybe you've caught yourself judging other drivers or judging a coworker, or maybe you were impatient with your spouse or your child, or a neighbor or friend. Two things that got in the way. And then one person that you helped. Now, this one might be tricky. Some days, I get to the end. I mean, I've only been doing this for about a week, and I get to the end of the day, and I'm like, Did I help anybody?

Right. And there was one day I just left it blank because I couldn't think of anybody that I helped. But it was a really good reminder. I'm going to keep focusing on the things that I'm grateful for to honor God. And I know there are things that hinder or get in my way that I'm selfish, or I've done things big or small that have not allowed me to just sit with a coworker and listen to them or visit a neighbor or make a phone call to a friend who I know who's struggling something to help somebody else.

Now, this kind of practice, doing this every day, really is a spiritual discipline. When it becomes a routine, trying to set a specific day or time to complete this task is important. I have a reminder on my phone at 8 p.m. every night that just says gratitude 3 to 1 gratitude journal or something like that.

And it just pops up, and it reminds me that it's time to do this. But if this can become a spiritual discipline or a routine for you, you will find that this will help you better remove the log from your own eye to care for and help others compassionately.

We will like this at night. Candles symbolizing peace for a child who will be more towards the sun will be given to us.

And the government will rest on your shoulders. Beautiful girls. Mighty God. Eternal Father, Prince of peace in a world losing for peace. For peace, that we can hold the flame of peace. Recognizing the promise of a savior who brings troubled hearts. In this season of Advent, we light the candles of eternal hope in just peace. Celebrating the Prince of Peace, who calms our fears and brings harmony to our lives.