

Judge not, lest ye be judged.
1st John 4:1-12

Exodus 34:1-8

John 14:23-31

Responsive Proverbs 24:23-29

Matthew 3:1-5

Today we are going to be taking a different approach to John's teaching. And since the title of the message this morning is "Judge not, lest ye be judged" I thought we better start off reading the account in Matthew to set the ground work at what we will be looking at today.

Just a quick note from Matthew here before we get started in this weeks passage. Jesus is not instructing to not judge here, he is instructing that if you are to judge so do so carefully. Do not be a hypocrite, do not be self righteous, and when you judge be sure that you are not guilty of the same. And in light of the rest of the new testament scriptures, when you judge you are not doing it for judgment sake, you are not doing so to condemn, but you do so out of love and concern for another, pointing out sin, or troubles in the life of a fellow believer that they themselves might not see, or may think no one else sees and they are getting away with it.

The key is in verse 5, when Jesus says that we first must remove the spec from our eye so that we may see clearly to remove the speck from our brothers. We are to judge, but we are to be sure that we are in a place that we can do so in a way that is pleasing to God, in a way that is loving and seeks the better of the other, not to tear them down and feel like we are putting them in their place. Keep a thumb here because we will be returning back to Matthew 7 a couple of times.

When we started this book of 1st John I was not sure how long it was going to take to get through it. I started studying by reading the book in its entirety and saw that it was a lot of the same themes repeated and built upon and now that we are getting to the end of this book we are again starting to see some of these repeated themes.

Last week we went over and revisited 2 of the first tests we find here in 1st John, the test of Doctrine, and the test of obedience then we went into the 3rd test that John puts forth which is the test of Love. We will see a returning to that here in chapter 4, It would seem that the theme of God's love for us, and our love for our spiritual brothers and sisters is the central and major theme of John's writing here in this book. Yes, he is concerned for those in the assembly that are false, who are as he calls them, anti-christ, but he is always returning, and always repeating this theme of love your brothers and sisters in Christ.

In hindsight I can see where it may have been better to tackle this through by looking at each of these themes as they ran through the book as opposed to taking it chapter by chapter and verse by verse because there is so much overlap. That being said though, I have enjoyed going through this book this way, and for me who is the type of a person who can walk into a room and forget why I went there, this has been really good because it helps to drive it home and stick in my swiss cheese memory that I have.

It is because of said memory, it is my practice to study each week and prepare for that week. I may do a little preemptive study ahead if I have the time but it usually does not amount to much more then just some reading, so that being said and because of the nature of this book, and the decision to go through it verse by verse I ask that you bear with me as we continue through the rest of it which may

end up being sort of a rehash of what we have gone through with a few added things here and there.

So let us start this morning by reading our passage, 1st John 4:1-12. John has not yet left off the idea of testing our faith, and it occurred to me this week that he isn't telling us to just test our own faith, but this measure and test he gives of true faith should also be used to test the faith of others. I know I know, testing others requires that we...gasp! JUDGE others! We can't do that, this is 2018 we must be sensitive to everyone's needs and feelings and we must do all that we can so that we do not offend or hurt anyone's feelings.

Well sorry to break it to you, but judging the faith of others is exactly what John is telling his readers here to do here in Chapter 4. Up to this point we have been applying this on an individual basis, but if we are to look at the context of who John I writing to and to why, we see that he is warning these believers about false teachers, and how to know they are false teachers and how to protect themselves against them. I don't think it is wrong, or a miss use of the text to make personal application and to challenge ourselves and put our own faith to these tests to see if it is true or not, and I think early on there is an element of this in his writing, but I have now come to the conclusion that the main focus just like it was for Paul in Galatians is actually to refute these false teachers, to encourage the faithful, and to instruct the true children of God on how to identify, and protect themselves from those who have come to deceive, and that my friends, requires that we be testing, and judging those who teach, preach, instruct, and claim Christ to see if what they say holds true to scripture.

Ok flip back with me to Matthew 7, verse 15-20, Jesus says that we will be known by our fruits. By our actions, by our life, and as John says by our obedience toward God, and love toward each other. Once again, how do we know, how do we guard ourselves against these false prophets, against these anti-christ's unless we judge their fruits, their obedience, and their love.

This does create a challenging balancing act though, because of our human nature there sometimes arises a tendency to go to far to the other side in an attempt to balance out this liberal idea of "judge not." We risk becoming arrogant, prideful, thinking that we are the only ones who have it right and we must pound everyone else down into the ground. But remember Matthew 7, first remove the speck for your eye so that you may see more clearly. This is not the type of judgment that we are to practice, we do not set ourselves up as holy judges who wield the hammer of justice to bludgeon and abuse others.

Going back to James, the very last 2 verses of that book he gives the reason and purpose as to why we would judge the faith of another. Verse 19 of chapter 5. Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. Notice this kind of judgment is not one of anger, wrath, or self righteousness, but rather it is one of love and concern seeking to aid and to help. To return this brother who may have fallen into the trap of sin, and through love bring him back to the fellowship.

And While we are to stand for truth, and we are to have an answer and be willing to refute false doctrines that does not mean that we confront our friends and family members with name calling and pounding our fists on the table. I think we see this again back in the book of James, chapter 3:17. Wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by

those how make peace. James isn't saying that we should just roll over and accept defeat, but that in our discourse it should be seasoned with grace, and peace, Proverbs 15:1 says that a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

I say this because there can sometimes be a tendency when confronted about what we believe that we become defensive and rise to the challenge in a way that ends up being unfruitful. Or we may feel that we must correct all the wrongs in the faith of our friends and family. But Nothing is gained if the conversation is cut off by the use of aggressive and harsh language. As Aaron has reported this is something that he has noticed in many of the discernment ministry blogs. It appears that they have been fighting against false doctrine so much they have become sort of bitter, toward everyone who is not them, They end up seeing every problem as a nail, and they are the hammers. So with that in mind, next time your sweet old grandma says something that my not be quite right, I want you to look her in the face, and say, YOU HERETIC! And then see how far that will get you in your conversation and witness.

This aggressive, self righteous attitude it seems is become more and more prevalent in our society. We now live in a day where we are told that we are not to judge another, yet we hear the most hateful, and spiteful language used against anyone who has a different opinion then these very people who say that we have no right to judge. This has become common place in our politics and our society, but not only just, we can also find it in our churches. We have all heard it before, if you approach a friend or family member offering advice because you see them heading down a path that will only lead to destruction, their answer is. “ You can't judge me, only God can judge me.”

The sad truth of the matter is, they are right. While we may judge on one level and offer wise council, the final judgment is for God, and God alone. While they think they are being smart, they think this little quip gives them an out, Matthew 7 does not. Continuing on, verse 21-27

This is a sobering thought, this is truly frightening. When we stand before God will it be with pride in our accomplishments, in our moral life, or will it be with meekness knowing we deserve hell but it is only by the grace of God, and the blood of his son that we will pass from death to life. Only God will judge me, yes God will judge you so you may want to think about what you are saying here. This is a harsh reality, not an arrogant quip to be tossed around.

So were is this balance, how do we balance between standing for truth and right doctrine and not become one of these frustrated angry loud mouthed people? Well, I think again it all comes down to the love of Christ shining through us. One example I can think of, is one that Aaron brought up last week in acts with the account of Apollos who was fervently teaching and preaching Christ, but Aquila and Priscilla gently took him aside and taught him the ways of God more accurately. It was done out of gentleness and love. They did not act out of self righteousness, but out of love toward him where they lovingly instructed him so that he may more accurately represent the faith.

I think that A good modern example I see of someone who does this, who refutes false religions, and doctrines, is James White. In his debates he is gracious, kind, and respectful, calmly instructing and teaching God's word. I think this is the proper way to handle ourselves, we are to to be a witness for the hope that is in us, and not act as the final judge, but as a messenger, a watchmen on the wall. So that through our witness that God maybe pleased to save some. As I said last week, we are to love as Christ loves, which is even toward our enemies. Christians are not to answer anger with anger, and hatred for hatred, but we are to answer anger with peace, and hatred with grace.

But answering in peace and grace does not mean that we give ground, or give in to those who

attack, or seek to cause harm or deceive us. On the contrary, we must stand for the truth that is in us, but we must do it in such a way that it honors and glorifies Christ. So with that in mind, when we judge as we are instructed here to do so, we do so not out of a sense of arrogance because we are right and they are wrong and must be corrected, but rather we do so seeking instead to witness and minister to a lost soul. Or if it is someone who is a brother or sister in Christ, who may believe things that are not bionically founded, we are to instruct with all gentleness, meekness, and grace seasoned with love, seeking to bring about a fuller understanding just as Aquila and Priscilla did with Apollos.

So looking at our text today, John says in verse 1. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; And there it is, and why we have been talking about rightfully judging the faith of another. John's instruction that we are to use these tests that he puts forth not only on ourselves but to put others to the test also to see if they too pass and truly are a part of the family of God. The reason we are to do this, he says is because there are many false prophets have have gone out into the world.

Not everyone who calls themselves a Christian, really are. Some are self deceived, and some have come as wolves in sheep's clothing to deceive and lead others astray, or some have come seeking their own gain, and their own glory, and in the process create armies of false converts and false believers because they are not taught the truth of scripture. And the apostles instruct us that we are to test the spirits, we are to see if these people who are claiming Christ are true, or false and self deceived.

I am reminded of a guy I knew years ago, who I found out had gone to seminary. He was pursuing to become a pastor, not because he believed in God, but because it was in his estimation and easy field to work. You only have to work 1, maybe 2 days a week and if you can get a big enough church you get paid really well too with possibly a house provided for you. I wonder how many of these pastors out there have this as their motivation.

John gives us a basic test of doctrinal orthodoxy. Verse 2. "By this you know the spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. This is definitely not something that is popular today. This goes against the idea that there are an infinite amount of roads to heaven and that each religion is really the same just taking different paths. John is saying that true Christianity, true faith is exclusive, and not only that, just believing in God is not enough, you must believe upon Christ, the one who has come, in the flesh. And as John as already stated earlier..if you deny Christ, then you are anti-christ, your faith, your religion, your belief, is that of anti-Christ which is false,

Turn back to chapter 2, verse 21-23 so we can see once again exactly what John said about those who are anti-christ. "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either, he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

One can not claim to know God, or believe in God and yet deny his Son. The implications of this, is that true Christianity and faith in Christ is the only way to God. John goes on to say I verse 3, "and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Anti-Christ, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

The spirit of Anti-Christ is already here, it was here in the first century church, and it is here in

our churches today. The Anti-Christ isn't coming, he is already here. This is why we are to judge, and to test our faith, and not only our own, but that of others to see if they be true so that we can protect ourselves, and each other from these false teachers.

So I want to make mention here, notice that in John's doctrinal test he puts forth he is concerned with 1 thing. That they believe that Jesus who has come, is the messiah, is the Son of God, who is both flesh, and deity. He is not really concerned here about all the little nuances but of the one main central point. Verse 3, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the anti-christ, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

John was dealing with people who were claiming that Jesus could not be the Christ because there is no way that God would put on flesh since flesh is evil. We actually see some of type of thing today, albeit the opposite. As Solomon said, truly there is nothing new under the sun. Many today see Jesus as a prophet, as a teacher, as a good person but do not recognize him as Lord, or as God. They believe in his humanity, yet deny his deity. These are false teachers, and would call under John's description of anti-christs. For they deny the full nature of Christ. Where John was dealing with those who denied his flesh, we often times are dealing with those who deny his deity, while this may be a bit different the outcome is still the same. It is a denial of Christ, and as John said in chapter 2, who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ, He is anti-christ who denies the father and the son.

But not all is doom and gloom, verse 4. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. Christ has already over come this world, he has already defeated death, hell and the grave, and he is standing with us when we are faced with these false teachers and people who have come to deceive and cause problems. This is how we can have confidence when we must stand for truth, because Christ has already over come this world and these who are in this world have already been defeated.

John says that in verse 5, that these false teachers, the deniers of Christ are of the world. By world he is meaning the sinful, fallen mass of humanity who is in opposition to God. That is why they speak as of the world and why the world hears them. This is why so many are deceived and lead astray into false religions, false doctrines and follow false teachers. The reality is that they are lost sheep, who even thought they may be claiming righteousness, are really just following after the world. This is Satan's favorite lie, to convince people that they are righteous, that everything is ok, but the reality is we will all stand before God, and many who have been deceived will hear the words, "Depart from me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you."

This comes back around again, as to why we are to test the spirits, why we are to judge those who teach, those who preach, and those who claim Christ. How are we loving as we ought if we see someone heading toward destruction and we just grab the pop corn and watch the show? It is difficult for standing idly by is easy knowing that we will be faced with anger, and we will be attacked. How dare you judge me! Only God can judge me! Yet, it is what we are called to do, but we are to do so with love, with grace, and with peace.

In the last half of our passage today we see John is once again returning to this theme of love and reiterates again this test of Love. Verse 7, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, in that we loved God, but that he loved us

and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

This love is self sacrificing as he says in verse 11, If God so loved us, we ought to love one another. I think this is the perfect ending to put on this study today. This is exactly how we find that balance when we used these tests of true faith that John has given toward each other. God so loved us, that while we were his enemy he died so that he may be the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

When we are confronting a brother or sister about their sin, or even if they have confided in us their struggles. We are not to judge them with righteous indignation, but instead with love. The same goes for the fellow christian when it comes to doctrinal debates and differences, remembering these are our brothers and sisters not our enemies. And even when it comes to dealing with our enemies, we are to do so in such a way that brings glory and honor to our father. We are not to act as the world does, we are not the final judge, that is for God. But we are to stand for truth and righteousness, to judge the spirits, and to share the hope that we have.