

Today we finish up our discussions on the Sermon on the Mount. And we finish with the one point that almost everyone knows - the golden rule. Usually it is one of the first bible verses we learn as kids. It's much easier trying to teach us normal social skills with that instead of trying to make us remember all of Exodus as a kid.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you is much easier than trying to remember *10 thou shall not...* Granted it shouldn't be too hard to remember most of the laws Moses set before us. But, in context they won't really make a lot of sense.

But, treat others like you want to be treated. It's pretty straight forward. You want people to be nice to you then you need to be nice to them. It makes sense. If someone is nice to you, then generally you are nice to them. And if someone is rude to you, as much as we would like to say we ignore them, we are actually rude back.

So, when is it that we forgot to live by this rule? It is the simplest and easiest law in the Bible. And yet sometime between childhood and adulthood we completely forgot about it. Especially now, since the world has restarted post pandemic, people are more rude and demanding than I've ever seen in public.

Why is that? Why are so many people more rude now than ever before? Did locking people inside make them forget how to act in public? Are those of us who were required to keep working more sensitive to it now, because of some of the things we saw? Did not having a constant source of Christian interaction cause more problems than we anticipated? I don't know.

What I do know is when I forgot the Golden Rule. I didn't just forget it, but I forgot Matthew 7:1, *do not judge, so that you aren't judged*. In my late twenties and early thirties, I was not in a good place mentally. A number of negative things had happened in my life and I wasn't really handling them well. And I wasn't living a righteous life like Jesus has told us in the rest of this sermon.

I was living two lives. I was trying to be a good Christian. But, I only came to church for choir practice and Sunday's that I sang. The rest of the week, I was just trying to get by. See I felt at peace here, but I felt out of place everywhere else I was. And I felt out of place because I was judging everyone.

I was judging that they were judging me and I was holding that against everyone. I felt that I wasn't living up to anyone's expectations and everyone looked down on me. I felt that I could never be myself. I couldn't let anyone see the real me. I had to show them what I thought they expected to see.

I did this all the time when I was serving. Every table I went to I was a different person. I didn't completely lie to every table, that was how I justified to myself that I wasn't a completely horrid person. But I wasn't completely honest. I had different versions of me being a single parent working my way through grad school. Regulars would come in and ask how my daughter was. Obviously I wasn't talking about Wednesday back then. No, I personified my cat, Tayha.

One day I woke up and really took a look at my life. I realized that I wasn't treating people the way that I wanted to be treated. I realized that I also wasn't really judging them. I was judging myself. I was holding myself against standards that I set and I wasn't meeting them. And in my mind, I felt everyone was judging me against those standards.

That made me think about how I was treating everyone. I was not only not treating people the way I wanted to be treated, I wasn't treating myself the way that I should be treated. I

couldn't make other people happy if I couldn't make myself happy. And at that point in my life I didn't know how. I couldn't be kind to others because I was never in a mindset to be kind.

I was always angry and disappointed in myself. I had expectations set and I was nowhere near achieving them. I was going to be married and have a family, by that point in my life. I was going to be a doctor. I was going to save the world one person at a time.

Today in our confirmation class, I asked the confirmands to recite a bible verse and explain to me how it applies to them. For me I chose Proverbs 16:9 *The heart of man plans his way, but the lord establishes his steps*. I had a plan for my life and I wasn't reaching it. I kept fumbling over myself. And as a result, I treated everyone poorly and pushed them away.

Maybe God had the same plans for me that I did. But, he had a different plan on how I was supposed to get there. Fighting it and forcing myself into situations wasn't working. So, I started looking for signs on how to get my life back on track.

I now knew what to look for. I stopped assuming that people were judging me. And I stopped judging myself. I stopped trying to find that special person and let God put her in my life. I looked for signs and direction and followed the path laid out before me.

By doing this, it allowed me to start treating myself better. I was treating others how I wanted to be treated because now I knew. I made a successful career for myself in the service industry, because I followed the Golden Rule. I treated people the way I wanted to be treated.

We can all take the easy way and simply treat people nice because we want to be treated nicely. But, where does that get us? We journey through the wide gate with the gentle slope; but we don't really get anywhere. The path is superficial. We hear what we want to hear and we tell people what we believe they want to hear. There is no growth, no development, because you don't take on your concerns.

The narrow gate and the hard path lead you to life. You grow and become stronger. You face your trials and come through it. And you learn how you really want to be treated and how to treat others. The hard path is introspection.

We start by judging ourselves. Once we stop doing that, we can find our true path. To treat others well, we must first treat ourselves that way. We know how to treat others because it is a reflection of ourselves.

Heavenly Father, we have heard the old prophets teachings and we live the righteous life and new laws that Jesus has laid out for us. We look to build our houses on the rock and stand through troubled times. We accept the long hardened path and reflect ourselves in how we treat others. We ask for love, patience, and wisdom as we walk our journey through life. In your name....Amen.