

"Specks and Logs"
February 10, 2019 (Youth Sunday)
St. Paul's UCC Church
Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy

Matthew 7:1-5, 12-14

[Jesus continued teaching, saying:] "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

SONG: "Lord, I Want to be a Christian in My Heart"

Scene 1 (3 kids, plus new kid – not a speaking part)

["New kid" sitting on stairs, looking sad]

Kid 1: Hey, did you see that new kid?

Kid 2: Yeah, I can't *believe* what she was wearing today.

Kid 3: So lame!

Kid 2: Totally lame!

Kid 1: Her clothes were all stained, and so out of date.

Kid 2: And she kinda smelled, too!

Kid 3: Yuck!! I think she lives in that neighborhood where everybody is always moving in and out of.

Kid 1: Let's never be friends with her.

Kid 2: Yeah, we don't want to hang out with someone like *her*.

Kid 3: After all, we have a reputation to uphold.

SONG: "Lord, I Want to Be More Loving in My Heart"

Scene 2 (2 people who become increasingly angry as the scene progresses)

Person 1: Who are you voting for in the election?

Person 2: Oh, I'm going Republican all the way!

Person 1: What??? How could you vote for that party? Have you not even been paying attention to all the terrible things they are doing?? That's why I'm going Democrat all the way!

Person 2: Oh my goodness! The Democrats are awful! Name me *one* good thing they did when they had the power...

Person 1: I can't believe we've been friends for all these years, and I never knew about your terrible politics!

Person 2: Well! I could say the same thing about you!

Person 1: I'm sorry to say it, but I don't think I can associate with someone like you.

Person 2: No need to worry about that. The feeling is completely mutual. Hmphf!

[Both people storm off]

SONG: "Lord, I Want to Be More Holy in My Heart"

Scene 3 (4 super-duper braggy parents, all practically talking over one another)

Parent 1: I feel so bad for other people's kids. We *never* let Suzie and Sissy watch screens. No TV, no phones, no tablets, no nothing! I can't believe other parents let their kids on those things. It is so bad for those poor children!

Parent 2: Tell me about it. We only feed *our* kids organic, locally-grown food. No E.G.O.'s, no processed sugar, no parabens, no nothing! I can't believe that there are some parents who feed all that junk to their kids. You know, it's the children who are going to suffer...

Parent 3: Well, you just *know* my sweet Jane is going to get into a good college. We started her in the Mandarin language immersion preschool, and now she's studying the violin while writing a twice-weekly column for the New York Times. It is *all* about the extra-curricular activities, people! I can't believe other parents don't get that. It's like they don't even care about their own flesh and blood!

Parent 4: Well, *I* make sure that little Johnny never has any unstructured time. Idle hands are the devil's workshop, you know! He's in football, basketball, baseball, soccer, hockey, track, swim team, gymnastics, badminton, squash, cricket, croquet, water skiing, and putt putt golf. Oh, and did I mention, he teaches corn holing on the weekends! I can't *believe* other parents let their kids have free, unstructured time. You know, it's the kids who are going to be paying for it for the rest of their lives!

SONG: "Lord, I Want to Be Like Jesus in My Heart"

Scene 4

Confirmand 1: In our confirmation class, we talked about judgement the other day.

Confirmand 2: We were looking at our denomination's Statement of Faith (did y'all know the UCC has a Statement of Faith??), and one of the lines from it is: "God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles."¹

Confirmand 3: So, we read this, and one of us said, "Wait, wait. Hold up. I didn't think God was *supposed* to judge. Isn't God kind and loving and forgiving?"

Pastor MB: And after being impressed that the class would even notice that, and ask about it at all, I said something like this: "Yes, actually God does judge. Scripture is full of references to the judgement of God. But the thing is, God's judgment is WAY different from the way we judge."

Person 3: Well, from Jesus' words to us today from the gospel of Matthew, it looks as if we, as humans, really shouldn't judge at all. Like, ever.

Pastor MB: I would agree. Jesus says, "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" What he seems to be getting at is that we have no right to judge anyone, because we ourselves have so much that we don't have figured out yet. We are still full of brokenness and sin – all of us – so what right do we have to point out someone else's?

Person 4: And that's why God can be the only one to judge. Because God is perfect. And God judges us perfectly... in perfect love. And that's a love that we, as humans, just don't understand. We can't love like God, so we can't judge like God.

Confirmand 1: In our confirmation class, we said that "sin" is like missing the mark. So, when we are sinning, when we are missing the mark, it's like we are on the wrong path.

Confirmand 2: God sees us on the wrong path, and with judgement *and* grace, God tries to put us back on the right path. God tries to guide us, with love, over to place we are called to be.

Confirmand 3: Of course, we might resist it. We might not want God's prodding us back to the way. God doesn't force us. But with love, God keeps at us, trying to move us from the path of aimlessness and sin to the path of light and truth.

Person 5: And that is what the judgement of God looks like.

¹ From the United Church of Christ's "Statement of Faith," adapted by Robert V. Moss.

Person 6: But as for us, we don't have the right, or the privilege, to judge others. That's what Jesus is saying to us here. Because, truth be told, we'll probably *always* have that log in our own eye! We will never know the whole story of the person we are judging.

Person 7: It reminds me of that old saying, which goes, roughly: "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a secret war inside themselves."

Person 8: And it's true. We know so very little about what is going on with the people around us... even the ones we know the best, and love the most.

Person 9: Each one of us is a mystery whom only God fully knows and fully loves, and so only God can judge.

Person 10: So, church, here is our prayer: that any judgements would cease, and that we all would begin to see each other in humility, tenderness, and grace.

SONG: "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian in My Heart"