

Title: It's a me, Oh Lord!  
Text: Matthew 7.1-6  
Theme: Owning my sin  
Series: Matthew #39  
Prop Stmt: When we finally own our sin, we can own grace and pour it generously upon others.

Read Text:

Poland is a land of ashes and cemeteries. Some of you are familiar with the fact that during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Nazis built and operated 6 death camps where millions of people were gassed to death then burned in large ovens to remove as much evidence as possible. A simple view of those atrocities is to lay all blame at the feet of Hitler, Himmler and a few others. A closer look at history reveals that the entire situation is quite a bit messier than that.

At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Red Army (Soviet Union) occupied much of eastern Poland. If you remember Stalin and Hitler had established an agreement that divided up Poland between them. Germany got the west. Russia got the east. Hitler eventually broke that agreement, but for a while it stood. During that time hundreds of thousands of Poles were deported from their country to labor camps in Russia. Then came Germany. To the people in Poland who were being oppressed by the Russians, the Germans appeared to be a rescue operation. In some villages, like Jedwabne, the Poles were eager to please their oppressors. So, on the morning of July 10, 1941, by order of the mayor, a group of Polish men from the area was assembled. These men rounded up a group of about 40 Jewish men and took them to a barn where they were killed. Later that day about 250 to 300 Jews, including many women and children were led to the same barn, which was locked from the outside and then burned to the ground. This was not an isolated case.

The Russians killed the Poles and the Jews. The Germans killed the Jews and the Poles. And the Poles killed the Jews. And in desperate attempts to save their own lives, there were plenty of Jews who turned on their own people, the Jews. To this day, the hatred of Jews is still prominent in Poland leading many Jews to downplay their Jewishness. It remains as an open wound that is still festering. One sensitive Pole reacted and said, *"Why is it Poles are regarded as the worst anti-Semites? Why Poles and not the Germans, who planned and carried out the Holocaust? Why not the Soviets, who during the war cynically played the Jewish card.... Why is there not talk about present-day Russian anti-Semitism...?"* The Poles protested, "But there were circumstances." The Germans would say the same thing as would the Russians, as would the Jews. Leading Marci Shore, assoc. prof at Yale, to ask rhetorically in her lectures, *"But tell me, who managed to escape from those times with clean hands?"* No one did.

One lady from Germany said, “*For many years now we have met Germans who declare that they are ashamed of being Germans. I have often felt tempted to answer that I am ashamed of being human.*” (G. K. Chesterton, *hat is Wrong with the World?*)

No kingdom in this world has clean hands. No single person, no family, no state, nation, government, school, business, church or religion can claim pure moral superiority. And you have heard the accusation that all religions basically teach the same thing. That is so fundamentally untrue. Here is a concrete example. Organizations reflect the people who start and operate them. People are blame-shifters. The sinful nature that we inherited means that we attempt to put blame on other people. It started with Adam in Genesis 3. The human race is comprised of people who really believe that they are better than others. As soon as we assume that position, we not only assign blame to others, but we assign to ourselves, the right to judge, the right to convict, the right to condemn and the right to carry it out. Instead of owning the wrong of our sin, we deflect it and in its place we attempt to own the right to be prosecuting attorney, judge, jury and executioner. How can any people justify the Holocaust?

In glaring contrast with that is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. In order to be in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, you must be “poor in spirit” (5.3). That is, you must be humble. You must recognize that you have no claim to moral superiority. You have no right to assume a posture of being inherently better than someone else. Smugness, self-confidence, and arrogance, are the coats, hats and boots that are discarded at the door before you enter the kingdom. Those who are poor in spirit are humbled because of the reality of their sin. They mourn (5.4). They are not blaming others and exploiting the failures of others in such a way that they look better by contrast. They own their sin. Their standard of comparison is not the others around them. They do not waste their lives and stir their anger by stoking the fire of feeling like they have been cheated. Instead, instead, in contrast to believing that they have been taken advantage of, or that they are not getting what they are due, the candidates for the kingdom of God are those see their sin for what it is before the perfectly white-hot righteousness of God. These people have no excuses. They have no claim to God’s kingdom. They have no right to be accepted and they know it. They have dirty hands, dirty hearts, dirty minds, dirty motives, and there is no soap in the world that can wash it away. They know this. They own this and they cast themselves completely upon Christ. That is what takes place to become a member of the family of God; that is a member of the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

So, do not miss this now because this is so very important to understand. What we are saved with, we are saved to. The gospel that saves us is the same gospel that informs, compels and empowers us to live as a member of the family of God. So, what Jesus is saying here in Matthew 7.1-5 is the outworking, the application, and the fleshing out of 5.3. Here is what poor in spirit looks like.

I. **I have no right to be a judge and executioner.** (1-2)

This verse has become one of the most popular and most abused verses in the Bible.

### **A. What is does NOT mean**

#### **1. Suspend all moral clarity and discernment**

This does not mean that you suspend all moral clarity and discernment. This is obvious from v.6. Jesus says, “Do not give to scavenging beasts that which is holy and precious.” How do you know what is a scavenging beast and what isn’t? How you do know what is worth your investment and what isn’t? In order for you to obey v.6 (which we will look at in a few minutes) you have to make a judgment. But, what we hear is, “don’t judge me.” In other words, do not tell me that I am wrong, because I do not want to hear it. I am my own person and you have no right to disagree with me. Your job is to support me all the time, which means that you will never correct me, never challenge, and above all never, ever tell me that I am WRONG. If you tell me that I am wrong, then that means that you are wrong because that makes you a hater. You see, you can’t tell me that I wrong, but I can tell you that you are wrong if you try to tell me that I am wrong. I know that sounds like I am contradicting myself, but I am not because...because, well... I said so.

Seriously, it is that absurd. And the effect of that has been like a gag order on people and the church. If you speak out against something, you can expect to be attacked and labeled as being judgmental. Part of the problem is ignorance. Popular culture does not understand the difference between discernment and being judgmental. This prohibition by Christ does not mean that we suspend all moral clarity and discernment. Neither does it mean that we...

#### **2. Refuse to confront problems.**

Let’s say you have a guy and a girl who are sexually active, but are not married. Christ is very clear about that right here in the Sermon on the Mount. He forbids it. So, what do you do about it? Let’s say that the girl is your daughter and she is living in your home. So, you address this with her and she tells you that you have no right to judge her because Jesus said, “Don’t judge.” Or, the guy is a friend and claims to be a brother in Christ and is a member of your church and he tells you that he and the girl prayed about it and God said that it was okay for them to have sex because their situation was a little unusual. Therefore, you have no right to judge them. Is that true? NO!!! That is patently obvious from the very next verses. How do we know that someone has a speck in their eye? We see it! We discern that there is a problem that our brother or sister needs help with. That means that we are confronting the problem. So...

### **B. What it does mean.**

Verses 2-4 are very, very helpful in defining what Jesus meant in verse 1. Jesus is warning about the person who is pronouncing judgment upon another person all the while acting as if they are morally superior and have nothing to address in their own lives. It is also very, very important to note that Jesus is taking the attitude of being “poor in spirit”

and applying it to when we are seeking to help resolve a problem. So, when you are trying to help someone fix a problem, or you are trying to resolve a problem with you and another person, what is the first thing that you need to do? You need to consider your part of the problem. You need to recognize that you are not morally superior. You have no right to act as if you are the prosecuting attorney, judge, jury and executioner. And that is so very easy to do.

One night at the dinner table, many years ago, my youngest daughter, Arianna wanted some more milk. So, she got up from the table and got the milk out and refilled her glass. She noticed that her sister's glass was empty and decided to fill hers up as well. The problem is it wasn't empty. It had water in it. Of course, I knew exactly what Arianna was up to. She was acting as if she didn't know that there was water in it, and was pretending to be nice to Rebecca, only to yank her chain and watch her sister freak out, something that she was very capable of doing. I mean seriously, why have a nice, relaxing dinner with the family when you can get someone in trouble or get them all torqued up, right? But, I knew what she was doing and before Rebecca went apoplectic, I simply informed Arianna that she had to drink the water/milk combination.

The other night Arianna informed me, that she really didn't know that there was water in it. She was really trying to be nice to her sister. But, I was prosecuting attorney, judge, jury and executioner. I knew the truth, but I really didn't and (and this was my failure) I did not take the time to find out the truth. I pronounced judgment on a situation before I really knew what the problem was. I did not consider myself. I did not consider the fact that I am a sinner and I am capable of misinterpreting things. When we are helping with a problem or reacting to a problem, even as a parent, our attitude should be, "I have no right to be a judge and executioner.

What are some things that we believe and/or say that violate this command of Christ?

"You will never change."

"You are just like your dad (or mom)."

"Go to hell."

"I will never forgive you. I will never let you forget what you have done to me."

Those statements are pronouncements of judgment. There is NO gospel in those words. I have no right to speak any words that do not reflect the gospel. The truth is God could rightfully pronounce condemnation on me, but instead of condemning me, he, the ultimate offended party, sent Christ in my place. God responded to my need with hope. Only God has the right to condemn, not me. When you are confronting a problem and seeking to resolve it, remember, you have no right to be judge and executioner. You cannot condemn. That is not our right. Therefore instead of bringing condemnation, bring mercy. Throw away the gavel and the electric chair. Instead bring the gospel. It is the only hope for you anyway.

## II. My problem is more serious than yours. (3-4)

You know that you are showing the fruit of humility when you treat your own problem as being more serious than someone else's. The analogy that Christ uses is actually rather humorous, but the issue that he is addressing is not. We tend to be overly sensitive to and critical of the sins in others that we struggle with. We find it very easy to criticize others of the very sins that we excuse in ourselves. Jesus knows that about us. Therefore, this is good counsel. Treat your problem as being more serious than the problem of the other person. Jesus says that your sin is like having a log in your eye. When you point out the speck in someone else's eye, but ignore the log in your eye, you are being absurd! You are blind. You are arrogant. My heart is so deceitful that I read this text and immediately think of all the other people who need to hear this.

Jesus will bring this up again in Matthew 18 when he tells the story of the man who was forgiven an enormous debt and yet turned around and refused to forgive someone of a very small debt. Our sin before God is serious, and God through Christ forgives us. The sins of others against us are not insignificant, but if God is merciful toward us, we not only can be merciful and humble toward others, we must be.

If you are trying to help someone with a speck in their eye, you are involved in a delicate situation. You know this. When you are talking with a child about a hurt received at school, or about the loss of a pet, you are handling a delicate matter. When you are talking with a person about rejection, fear, shame, or sinful patterns, abuse, or neglect, you are being invited into a very private and sacred place in that person's heart. You have the capacity to hurt that person deeply particularly if you are in a position of authority and you refuse to consider the fact that you have some issues in your life that you need to address. The truth is...

### III. **I must address my problem before I can help you out.** (5)

When Jesus says that we are to take the log out of our own eye, he is saying that we have a serious problem that demands serious attention. If I "deal with my problem" in a flippant manner, then I am not being serious about my sin. The log in my eye is a big problem and I have a big problem because I haven't even noticed it!

Imagine that you go to see an eye doctor because your eye hurts. It feels like something scratched your cornea. If you ever left your contacts in too long, you know what I am talking about. Your eye feels like it is on fire. So, you go to the doctor, and after you are seated in the room at the examination table, the doctor comes in with a 2x4 stuck in his eye and he wants to examine your eye. Of course all that you want to do is duck so that you don't get clocked and have even more problems.

But, Jesus is not addressing the person with the speck. He is talking to the person who presumes to be the eye doctor. What is he saying? Listen because if you get this, that is, if you hear this with your heart, it will serve you and everyone around you, and the church and the gospel so very well. Here it is: The failures and problems of others around you are God-ordained appointments designed to help you grow. Every problem around you is an opportunity to examine your blind spots. You have blind spots. The only person who

did not have blind spots was Jesus. I have blind spots and you have blind spots. I can see yours, but I don't see mine.

What kind of a people is Jesus calling us to be? What kind of a church do we want to be? We are called to be vulnerable so that we can experience grace. The more grace that we experience the more we are in a position to pour grace out upon others. We can be gracious and merciful without excusing sin. Jesus is and we are his people.

So, let's wrap this up and think deeply about this and the implications of it.

- I must treat my sin as being more serious as your sin. (therefore)
- I need to be much more concerned about my heart before I am concerned about what others do to me.

No one can harm you, like you can harm you. No one has more influence on your life as much as you do.<sup>1</sup> You talk to yourself more than anyone does. You are constantly preaching to yourself. You are either preaching the gospel of Christ, or the condemning gospel of self-righteousness (which is no gospel). You are either telling yourself what Jesus is saying, that you really are in need of just as much grace any other person, or you saying and believing, that while you are not perfect, you are better than most. What is the message that you believe? What is the message that you are preaching to yourself?

Parents, your child's greatest danger is not the world around him/her, but the evil within him/her. You will be sinned against. That is a given. Your children will be sinned against. There are evil people in this world, but I need to fear and address the evil in my heart. Yes, I will be sinned against, but I will also sin against others, and I need to address that. Do you see the freedom that this brings? When I am rightfully concerned about my failures and weaknesses and sins, then I am not obsessing 1) about the wrongs that I think have been done to me and becoming bitter. I am free from rehearsing their failures over and over and being in bondage to my anger and vengeance. 2) When I am primarily and rightfully concerned about my sins, then I am free from the bondage of the fear of man. Acknowledging the truth about my own heart frees me from trying to protect or portray some kind of image before others. The person who humbly and honestly is dealing with issues in his own life and is open to the input of others is in a wonderful position to be able to help others. Gospel driven humility is like honey. It not only attracts, but it is sticky. And it is good-sticky.

This is not only urgent for developing unity and advancing joy in a marriage and family, but look at the potential fruit that can come if we embrace this as a church. What kind of an atmosphere and culture would we have if we as a people were more concerned about and humbled by our sin before we talked about others?

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<sup>1</sup> Some of this is from Paul Tripp's *Dangerous Calling* book (p.21) and reflects other things that he has taught through the years.

Here's the deal, we live around people and work with people who need Christ. They need to hear the gospel. They need the ministry of the church, but they do not want to have anything to do with the church because the church is full of hypocrites. What is a hypocrite? Jesus tells us (v.5)! It is someone who is pointing out the sins of others without addressing his own sins. A hypocrite is NOT someone who is imperfect. A hypocrite is someone who fails to admit what is patently obvious to everyone else – You are imperfect. Own it and run to Christ. But, if we as a church own it, then instead of having a disapproving and condemning atmosphere that makes people want to run away, we can have a love-driven, truth-telling, Christ-exalting, hope-filling atmosphere that is willing to tell people what they need to hear, even warning them, if need be, but in a way that keeps the gospel before them. But, even if you are humble and truthful...

IV. **Some people do not want help.** (6)

Not everyone wants to hear, so be discerning because some people will take what you give them and turn around and seek to do you great harm. It is a sad reality. We are not to be naïve. This obviously happened to Jesus. There are times when you cannot help people because they do not want to change. They do not want to address the issues of their heart. They want to blame others, or want to change the circumstance, or remove the consequences, but they refuse to look at their own sin. At that point, you have to back off. They are not ready yet. They will only take what you give them and turn around and attack you with it. We cannot fix every person. They have to be ready. So, in those situations, guard your heart from being proud, or being condemning and assuming that they will never change. Remain humble and hopeful. You were like that way at one time too.

What are the sources of your greatest angst and conflict? Pray through these four points, particularly the first three, and plead with God to help you see your own sin so that you can address that and be humbled and useful to the Lord.