

**6.26.22 – Pentecost 3**  
**“Sin and Hypocrisy or Grace?”**  
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Proverbs 26:23-28 (NLT) ~ Pam**

- <sup>23</sup> Smooth words may hide a wicked heart,  
just as a pretty glaze covers a clay pot.
- <sup>24</sup> People may cover their hatred with pleasant words,  
but they’re deceiving you.
- <sup>25</sup> They pretend to be kind, but don’t believe them.  
Their hearts are full of many evils.
- <sup>26</sup> While their hatred may be concealed by trickery,  
their wrongdoing will be exposed in public.
- <sup>27</sup> If you set a trap for others,  
you will get caught in it yourself.  
If you roll a boulder down on others,  
it will crush you instead.
- <sup>28</sup> A lying tongue hates its victims,  
and flattering words cause ruin.

**L: These are Wise Words from God. C: Thanks be to God!**

**Matthew 7:1-5 (NLT) ~ Pam**

- <sup>1</sup> Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. <sup>2</sup> For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.
- <sup>3</sup> And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? <sup>4</sup> How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

**L: These are Words of Accountability from Jesus! C: Thanks be to God.**

**Please pray with me:**

Dear Lord, even with such difficult Scriptures, we are grateful to be in worship with you and each other. Please speak to us in our context through this parable from Jesus. May we be open to a new message and be obedient to its direction for us personally and as a church. Help us to be attentive as you and the Holy Spirit speak through me today. **“Amen.”**

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Do you all know about an internet search tool called Yelp? It’s a bit like the Yellow Pages, but customers leave reviews about businesses, restaurants, and even churches. Sometimes these reviews are outstanding,

5-star descriptions of excellent customer service, low prices, or good value. You get the picture. Other times, there are scathing remarks about poor service, high prices, or rude people. The same experience produced different outcomes, and let's face it, we have all had a bad meal at a favorite restaurant. The reactions to the same experience were different: one was positive, and one was negative. Our passages today were Jesus' instructions for the disciples, but they are keenly relevant for our world today.

You remember King Solomon who ruled Israel (961-922 BC) before it divided. He was known for his wisdom, and much of it was captured by the scribes. King Hezekiah who ruled Judah (after the division) from 715-686 BC wanted to preserve the wisdom of history and had men of his court write down the sayings we find in Proverbs 25-29. The verses in Proverbs 26 prior to our passage warned the people to be cautious in their speech, knowing that words can hurt and gossip spreads unhappiness. Our verses 23-28 deal with lying and hypocrisy.

The glaze on a piece of pottery (or read between the lines: "smooth talk") is beautiful, but not functional. It does not strengthen the pot; it only creates an illusion of quality. Just as deceit may persuade someone as an attractive option, but deceit is unethical and manipulative. Deceiving someone is an intentional act of malice, and that is a sin. Lying is a form of hatred, and flattery is a form of lying or embellishment told against an individual. Consequences follow such lies and hypocrisy; sure, people get away with it in our culture for a while, but not usually for long. God is a God of Justice and Equality. Ungodly behavior is not rewarded, nor is it the hallmark of a believing Christian.

A malicious person may be charming on the outside but has an evil heart on the inside. In the time Jesus was teaching, he was calling out the Pharisees, who would punish a person for not keeping some minor religious rule (like helping someone on the Sabbath), when he himself secretly lived in arrogance and sin in private. Last week we were in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, learning ways of kingdom living, and next in Chapter 6, Jesus continued to teach a better way of faithful living with God's provision and merciful love, rather than trying to follow hundreds of Pharisaical self-serving religious laws. By the time of this Chapter 7, he is using the Pharisees as an example of hypocrisy. They judge Jesus incorrectly as a radical who departs from God's teachings in the Torah. But we know in hindsight that the temple leaders had corrupted the Torah to serve their needs of money and prestige.

His example is pointing out the splinter or speck in someone else's eye when you yourself have a plank or a log in your own eye, like the illustration on the bulletin cover. It's not a literal illustration, but it is something all of us and the disciples could understand. The speck and log are hyperbole to make a point, so what does it mean? The Pharisees began to criticize Jesus and his disciples (i.e., as a speck in the eye) when their own false grandiosity and legalism were a log in their own eyes that they could not perceive. God will be the final judge, so how dare they pass judgment in a punishing manner, when they have no Godly authority to do so? Jesus cleverly says that his followers must **not** be quick to condemn others, but must be loving and show brotherly affection. Our passage at breakfast yesterday was 2 Peter 1:5-7: “<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with

knowledge, <sup>6</sup> knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup> godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.”

For us, Jesus warns of habitual criticism and cynicism of another person, rather than taking a good look in the mirror first. Jesus is clearly asking us to take the time for self-reflection and equal judgment. You’ve heard it said: “Don’t judge another until you’ve walked in their shoes.” Only by our confession and repentance will we be forgiven and met with God’s grace and mercy. If we always point out others’ faults, we will be judged more harshly by God. As humans, we want to confront and defend a position, but Jesus’ message is countercultural: *meet that malice with kindness, love, and mercy*. You will be rewarded for it. We often criticize people for unemployment or not being able to care for themselves. Have we thought back on our own times of misfortune or desperation to find compassion for that person? We have a responsibility to deal with our own shortcomings first; if we do not judge harshly, God will reward us with hearts of compassion and love and will provide what we need to share with others.

Hear me say that when there is something terribly wrong or abusive, we must not keep silent. Yet, we must not jump to immediate conclusion: pray about your actions, pause long enough for the Holy Spirit to guide you. Didn’t we learn in James this year to guard our tongues? Here’s why: in our quick condemnation, our own sinfulness may be revealed. In the areas of immorality, for example, if that is a hot button for you, it becomes evident that you must “know” immorality in order to spot it. So, what is your weakness? In the weaknesses we point out in others in anger

or judgment, God will reveal in public our own weaknesses. I am not perfect and do not want that consequence. How about you? Now, if your career is as a judge, that's a different matter. Most Judges have proven over the years of education, training, and experience to have balance in their wisdom. But, we have no rights to judge others, Jesus says.

What we can do is to help one another in mercy and grace. As disciples, to do that well is to know thyself. To do that is to spend more time with God the Father through prayer, Scripture, and service. You have prayer tools that can guide you. You have instructions to re-read these parables in a different way each day. Surely the Holy Spirit will speak to you in those contemplations. Do you often find yourself angry and judgmental? It is normal but does not have to be a way of life. Critical spirits are counterproductive in our personal lives and in the church. Get with Jesus every day; find time to spend alone with God.

Last week as we talked about Juneteenth and our freedom in Christ, I think this applies. There is NO freedom in hypocrisy, sin, or malicious thought. There **is** freedom through Christ only through love, compassion, and action. And still, it is important that if you see something evil or dangerous, you must say something to an authority. That has proved to prevent evil actions, yet, even then, do not judge. Compassion is often getting that person merciful help and mental health assistance.

Please remember to listen first; you cannot take back your hurtful words. Are you "Listening for the Work?" Ask yourself, can you be an everyday hero by observing opportunities to show love, even in an atmosphere of hate? Our world needs that desperately right now. God intervenes through love, not condemnation. In Hamlet, Shakespeare even

said: “To thine own self be true;” you must know your weak areas of judgment and repent of them. Can you identify the logs in your own eyes? That is the first step, and if you have, that is wonderful news. Be the light into the world that Jesus preached in Mark’s gospel. Be the love and grace in our world. And if you can’t figure it out for yourself, come see me for next steps. Amen. |/

**Will you pray with me?** God, you are wise to remind us we are not you. We must not judge others harshly. Help to reveal the weaknesses in our own lives that cause us to condemn others. We thank you for creative images in your parables; may we listen for your direction through them. Let us go on today to our next commitments with a desire to learn new meaning from these familiar stories. Let your love and light shine through us this week. **Amen.**