

What's In Your Eye?

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[0 : 00] I'm just going to read a portion of the word we're going to talk about today. It comes from Matthew chapter 6 verse 22 and 23.

It says this, the eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.

But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness?

Let's pray. Father, will you not shine your light on us today and through us drive away the darkness.

Bring forth your word, use your servant to glorify your holy name. And may your people hear. May I hear.

[1 : 21] And respond. And listen. As your servant. We pray this morning in Jesus name. Amen. You may be seated.

I was going to sing this little light of mine. I'm going to let it shine. This little light of mine. I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of mine. I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine. About a year ago or so I was having an eye problem actually.

It was kind of strange in a way. Last sometime in December or so. It wasn't quite a year. But I was having a problem. I had to go see my doctor and so forth.

And at the same time the Lord just gave me a passage of scripture that talked about the eye. I thought it was kind of ironic. I was kind of laughing to myself. Here I'm having this eye problem. And God would direct me in this sort of way.

[2 : 24] I got what I want to talk to you today which is asking you the question. What's in your eye? What's in your eye? I sort of popped this off from.

You've probably seen the commercials with Samuel Jackson in which he goes through all this stuff. And he asks you, what's in your wallet? Now maybe you were expecting the preacher to say something like that.

Yeah. Oh, was that a judgment? I don't know. But that's not it. I want to ask you today, what's in your eye?

And I was supposed to do this a long time ago. And January came and something came up. And then I was supposed to do this in April and something else came up here. And actually today I was supposed to be in St. Martin's on my 47th anniversary.

Had it all planned out, paid for, and all the rest of that. And then we checked passports and found out they were out of order. So I know God wants at least me to be here.

[3 : 32] Because I've tried several times to get away from this. But apparently he wants me to share this word. And I am so grateful for the opportunity to do that. This of course, what I just read to you, is coming from the book of Matthew.

It's coming from Jesus. I think it's good to listen to Jesus every now and then here. Particularly in the book of Matthew. Where he talks about the Beatitudes.

And well, Matthew presents him as this really, the really new Moses. He teaches too. He has a law too. But it's kind of different. And he takes it a different sort of way.

I often told my students today, you know, are you really a disciple of Jesus? Are you just an American Christian? Because the two may not be the same thing, actually, when you think about it a little bit here.

So there will also be a passage in Luke 6 that I'll get to maybe here. But we'll see how it goes here. I want to start with at least sharing what my major sort of points will be here.

[4 : 41] And those four points I want to share with you. So point number one. I don't know if it's up there here. Yeah, point number one. What we're going to read comes from Luke, excuse me, Matthew chapter 7.

The first few verses that talk about not judging. And that's my first point. You really can't go wrong if you quote Jesus, you know, here.

If you say what he says. And he says, judge not that you be not judged. Judge not that you be not judged. That's pretty good.

We're going to ponder that a little bit. What does that actually mean here? Our second point is, as we'll see in this passage, it says, please make sure, brothers and sisters, that whatever measure it is that you're using, whatever standard that you're using, whatever criteria, whatever you want to call it, that it's deeply rooted in scripture and directed in love and forgiveness and under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit.

Make sure that that is the case here. Our third point is one we often hear here that means something.

[6 : 03] The third point is that all of us here, unless you are somebody really unusual here, all of us need to repent. I know there's one person that needs to hear this sermon.

That's me. Because I am judgmental. I know I am. And as you'll see here, sometimes I'm the hypocrite here, standing here. And I need to repent.

And, you know, saying you're sorry and apologizing is a good start. But repentance requires the fruit of repentance. There's got to be change.

There's got to be real change. As we examine ourselves faithfully and deal with the log that is in our own eye. And we need to do that before we attempt to remove the speck that is in the eye of our other brothers and sisters.

And this is hard work. You can't do it apart from God's grace. You can't do it apart from God's grace. And if I get to chapter 4, because Jesus said, he does say, you know, after you've taken care of this log in your own eye, you might be able to deal with the speck that is in your brother's eye.

[7 : 17] There is a possibility that we might have an obligation to do that when somebody goes off in a stray. And so in this, someone has gone off. And here, since I may not fully get to this one, I want to take just a moment to say here.

You notice that it says, repent, examine yourself, and faithfully deal with that log. Point four I'm moving to here. Brothers and sisters, if anyone is caught in a transgression, you who are spiritual, the term is pneumatic way, should restore a wayward brother.

You notice that the term doesn't say, you who are elders, restore. Restore. You who are deacons, restore. You who are great givers to New City Fellowship, you restore.

You who are the professionals and the counselors and the lawyers and the rich people or whatever. You who are really, really, really important, you restore.

No, it says you who are spiritual. And that's a sermon in and of itself. That maybe if you invite me, I'll come back.

[8 : 28] And if I don't scare you off with what I got to say today, maybe I can say a little bit more about what that means. So we're going to get into this. I want to go to a passage here that we had just read to you.

The eye is a lamp to the body. And one of the things we need to see, first of all, there's a difference between an ancient view of the eye. The eye is an amazing thing.

I'm not an ophthalmologist here, but I know the eye is an amazing thing. There's no other part of your body that's like it. And there's a difference between the modern view and an ancient view about the eye.

The modern view says that the light comes into the eye and it goes and somehow through a process that's just fantastic, it changes that, goes straight to our brain and behold, we see.

Try that with your hand. See anything? Try that with your foot. See anything? It doesn't work. Just the eye. It's an amazing thing. Light coming in.

[9 : 33] But that's not how the ancient world and the world that Jesus lived in. That's not how he saw the eye. That's not how people of his day saw the eye. The eye really here is light that comes out of the eye, actually comes out of the body.

And we can see both literally and figuratively. So this is going to help us make sense of what Jesus is going to tell us here. If light is coming out, I want you to, this is dangerous now, but I want you to take a look at somebody right next to you and look them in the eye.

Let's take a quick moment to look them in the eye who's sitting next to you. It's a hard thing to do to tell you the truth. It's really hard to look somebody in the eye.

What did you see, color? Did you see shape? Or did you see something else? Did you see sorrow?

Did you see pain? Did you see joy? Fear? Did you see excitement for life? The eyes tell us a lot of things.

[10 : 40] Did you see, did you see the love of God? Do you care when you look in somebody's eyes? Eyes tell us a lot.

They tell us many things about each other and they tell us much about the health of our church. And people can't look you in the eye and talk to you. You know something's up.

Something's up there. So this passage contrasts light and darkness. In this case, there are two terms that are being used here figuratively.

Light means more than just the ability to see things. It suggests spiritual insight. It suggests discernment. It suggests at some level godly contentment.

Light. Light of God in you. We need to reflect that light. This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine. Darkness, on the other hand, does not mean that you are literally blind.

[11 : 47] A lot of people walking around here, but they are blind. Especially those who, according to the scriptures, who do not believe. It means that really, that darkness, you're spiritually blind.

You are spiritually unhealthy. And that term about healthy, when the eye is bad, the same Greek term, it's poneros. It means it's evil.

Here. Something that's worked, that's really, really, really not good. And you know, of course, that the God of this world tries to blind the eyes of the unbelievers and to keep them, according to 2 Corinthians 4, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel, of the glory of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God.

He wants to blind folks from that. And sometimes, when we aren't careful, and we aren't watching ourselves, we kind of miss it too. We got a little shadow.

A little shadows there. A little shadows in your eye today? Hmm. I think this gives us some background. Perhaps we can now see more clearly what Jesus means when he once again comes and he uses the analogy of the eye to drive home an important teaching about judging others in our lives.

[13 : 14] So, Matthew chapter 7, verse 1. Judge not that you be not judged. Other passages of scripture, like the message, and others say, don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults, unless, of course, you want the same treatment.

Do you? Do you want the same treatment? That's what it says here. It's a little free with that. Here. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging.

That's not in the Greek, but you get the idea. Here. Common Bible says, don't judge so that you won't be judged. Here.

And the NIVA says, don't judge or you too will be judged. Hmm, something coming here. Don't judge others and you will not be judged.

And the Passion Translation says, refuse to be a critic full of bias toward others and you will not be judged. You know, there's a, some of us like Judge Judy here.

[14 : 18] Ah, here. We love, we love to watch her tell, shush, shush, shush, shush, shush, and straighten yourself out. Not in my court. You won't do this, et cetera.

This woman, this woman's one of the highest paid women in television. The highest paid woman in television. We love to watch her humiliate people and shush them in the court and straighten them out.

I think we all sort of have a little bit of Judge Judy in us a little bit here. But we make our judgments about people every day, about all sorts of things.

We comment on people's weight. Doesn't the Bible say something about your gun and your belly? I know, I know where she worships or he worships. We do this all the time about their appearance.

Did you see that tattoo? Ooh, oh my. Look at that hair. We do it all the time and we don't think much about it. For 30 years I was a professor coming to college and maybe I should have just said, look, who am I to judge these papers and exams here?

[15 : 23] You all get A's here. I mean, Jesus says, do not judge and that's sort of the problem here. It's pretty straight. Jesus says, do not judge and yet we make judgments all the time and yes, sometimes some of those judgments are pretty good.

So what does Jesus mean then? Are we not supposed to judge at all in any context, in any setting? Here, what does this word mean? Krino is the word and it means, wait for it, here it comes, to judge.

Yeah, that's what it means. It means to condemn, to decide, to determine, to consider, to regard, to think, to prefer, to form and express a judgment or opinion as to any person or anything more and more usually very unfavorably.

You idiot. Sort of an absolute sense. Jesus has a lot to say about judging. In John, he says this, John chapter 7, 24, do not judge by appearance, but judge with right judgment.

judgment. So there's a possibility of judging, but judge with right judgment. Jesus had to tell this to a crowd after he had healed somebody and they were trying to kill him. Talk about, talk about judging for somebody.

[16 : 48] I think Jesus knew what it's like to be judged incorrectly in life. In John chapter 8, he says, you judge according to the flesh. I judge no one, yet even if I do judge, and this is something we've got to remember, my judgment is true.

For it is not I alone who judge, but I am the Father who sent me. Jesus, you want somebody who want to be judged, who's going to be right every time about every issue in every setting.

You better count on Jesus for that. Not you and not me. Certainly not me. That's for sure. I mess up all the time. In Matthew 7, this is really the only place where Jesus uses this word and it's the same word that is used again in Luke chapter 6 verse 37.

Judge not, this is in Luke, and you will not be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you.

Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. And here there's a little payoff on the word measure. Jesus concludes, for with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

[18 : 11] So, what does Jesus mean when he uses the word judge here? To put it, excuse me, to put it in plain terms, this is my little definition here, don't engage in pernicious, biased, criticism of others, which is often unthoughtful, unsolicited, uncompassionate, and usually unwarranted.

Pernicious, by the way, look, if Bobby Brown could teach you the word prerogative, you should know what the word pernicious means. Okay? It's nasty.

I'll put it that way here. Don't, I think Jesus is talking about that. He's not talking about evaluating a paper or a judge pronouncing a, you know, sentence on someone here in that sort of sense.

He's talking about this kind of stuff as he talks to his disciples and he talks to me, to my heart. Whether in person or in social media, too many of us are straightening people out, putting people down, putting people in their place, hurting other feelings, exposing the short, the shortfalls and the sins of others and yes, we do have them to be sure.

When we judge people in this manner, we are actually, perhaps tacitly, promoting our own supposed superiority, spiritually or otherwise.

[19 : 38] We may be seeking to say of us as struggling believers, brothers and sisters, our own sins and shortcomings. You judge, but it's, but it's, it's, it's given you in order that you don't end up being judged.

It doesn't boomerang back onto you. Chapter 7, verse 2, he said, that's my second point. What's your measure? You will be treated as you treat others, contemporary on others.

He will treat you body low, boy. Because you will be measured by the same measure. He knows our sinful nature. He knows we are quick to just, particularly these days, much often and more often than compliments, words of encouragement, acts of forgiveness for the failings of others.

As a judge, Judy, in all of us. But we don't get a TV contract and most of us don't have a law degree. Art Grisham is a, he'll be an exception to that here.

He does. And there's a few other of you here too. But most of us don't. And so we, we're quick to, to judge people. Did you see, did you see what that dress she was wearing in church here today?

[21 : 00] Did you see that tattoo that guy has here? Boy, that sermon was a complete bore. Oh my goodness. Here. Ah, they didn't sing my favorite song here.

I think I'm gonna look for another church. I gotta, I gotta go. And why do they always have to bring that race stuff into this? You know, I was talking about race and, and, and justice and, and, can't they just get over slavery?

Come on. Let's move on. Why did they have, hmm, wow. I say this in fun here for someone to, you know, when you lose weight, you ought to go out and buy a new pair of pants.

I know it was meant, all in fun and jest here, but, oh boy. Do you really give serious thought to the standard, the measure that you use to judge others?

That's my second point. Is scripture, or is it your own personal biases and prejudices, your own fears? Here's what the scripture says about treating one another in the community of faith.

[22 : 08] And this comes from the apostle Paul from Ephesians 4, chapter 29. Excuse me. Yeah, verse 29, chapter 4. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth, but only such as is good for building up as fit the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you, forgave me from the apostle Peter.

Finally, all of you have a unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind.

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless for to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing.

Curse be cursed. Bless be blessed. There is something at work here in scripture that we need to see. Whoever desires a life, desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking to see.

[23 : 31] Let him turn away from evil, darkness, unhealthy and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. Jesus had already told him that when he told him about if we forgive others in Matthew chapter 6, 14 and 15, your heavenly father will also forgive you, but if you don't forgive others, their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses.

I don't know about you, but I need forgiveness for my judgmental attitude, especially during the time when our church is experiencing some conflict and differences.

I've done some things that were wrong, maybe even said a few things that are wrong. I need forgiveness, but I also, as my third point is, I also need to make some changes.

real changes. What's the measure you use in judging others? What's in your eye? What's really in your eye?

Judgments and criticisms of others. If you miss point one and two, then judgments and criticisms of others, we miss a fine opportunity to examine our own eye, and our Lord ask us this probing question.

[25 : 03] In verse three, why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but you don't notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is a log in your own eye?

Apparently, some of us believe that we've been given this miraculous power to know the hearts and motivations of others. Somehow, we never stop to think what might be the sinful desires, fears, jealousies, prejudices in our own heart.

We're just ready to pass judgment. We've got you. We've got you all locked up, straightened out. So, let's quickly look at the passage in Luke chapter six, verse 37 and verses 42.

Not only does Jesus say, do not judge and you will not be judged, but he says, condemn not and you will not be condemned. This is often what we do when we judge others.

We write them off. We put them down. We are dismissive of them, their feelings and their heart. But, you know, in that passage, glory to God, there are two positive commands along with these two negative commands and these two positive commands tell us what?

[26 : 30] Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, but with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

And we focus on forgiving others who may offend us rather than judging them. A whole new dimension opens up to our hearts and our minds, our understandings and the healing of our hearts and minds as we are reminded and experience the forgiveness of God.

You know what God did for you? Why can't you do that for somebody else? Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, they messed up. But why can't you? What's stopping you? You know? But wait, there's more.

Give and it will be given to you. Good measure, press down. When you give rather than judge others, their needs and necessities become more important than your petty judgments and critical attitudes.

That's why the scriptures teach us to consider the issue, the interest of others before we pursue our own interests. In Philippians 2, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

[27 : 51] Let each of you look not to your own interest but also to the interest of others. Now, contrasting that speck and that log, you'll notice by the way that Jesus assumes that the log is in the judgmental eye.

Now, you got a log in your eye, you got a piece of wood in your eye, that basically means you can't see. You're blind. Is it possible that something's going on in your life and you can't see it?

Somebody's got to point it out to you. You just can't see it. You think everything is fine but it really isn't here.

Jesus assumes that that's there. And then secondly, he's a carpenter's son here. I think he knew far too well about specks, the difference between specks and beams and a little hyperbole here.

And I think that's why he can say elsewhere, can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not fall both into a pit? Jesus is adamant at this point and he calls folks hypocrites.

[29 : 07] Matthew 6, 5. And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners that they may be seen.

Hypocrisy is something I have to struggle with because I'm judgmental and I need to be careful of that. I need to, as Peter says, put away malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy in 1 Peter 2.

Like newborn babes, I need a love that long for, the pure spiritual milk that will make me grow in my salvation. So, God's grace calls us to repentance.

Repentance is always a first step from the sin of hypocrisy. We walk 180 degrees. We're going in this direction. We need to go in this direction, away from things.

We need to walk straight into the direction of love and forgiveness, of care of others, of sacrificial giving of our time, our energy, our money. We embrace the suffering that we attend, that will attend such actions.

[30 : 27] by the power and work of the Holy Spirit and his word, we change our mind and our attitudes about the people that we judge. Repentance has to have fruit.

It has to have fruit. We tell less and we listen more. Parents, listen to your children. Husbands, listen to your wives.

friends, listen to each other and then go back to verse 1. Point 1. Do not judge so that you won't be judged.

James chapter 5 verse 8 and 9. You also be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Yes, this particular verse from James has in its background the idea that the real judge is coming.

[31 : 34] The real judge is coming. And we've already seen his judgments are right and good and perfect.

And so when James says this, he says, establish in your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged.

I wonder where he got that from. Behold, the judge is standing at the door.

He's standing at the door. Now, Jesus didn't completely drop the idea that we might be of help to one another. That would be my point for but I'm not going to get fully to that.

We can challenge one another, admonish one another. We can call one another to holiness and godliness and accountability. That's what Galatians chapter six says, the one I pointed out to you.

[32 : 42] If you can ever figure out who is spiritual. But you got to take care, as Jesus said, take care of that log in your own eye first.

Deal with that. Consider what you use as a measure. We all are moving by God's grace towards spiritual maturity.

We're on that road. By God's grace, I pray that we can get there together. Together. In a spirit of unity and peace and love.

But we got a lot of work to do in this place. We're not there yet. We've got a lot of things we need to work on and we need to talk to one another about this.

But before we do, check out what's in your eye, my brother, my sister.

[33 : 47] Perhaps it's time for the Holy Spirit to do a little optical work on you and on me.

I had a cataract removed once. I tell you, it was delightful. It was like, I can see. Oh no, I can see.

Wow, the light. I can really see. We've got some work to do to see much better, to love much better, to serve much better.

And you know, I think if we do that, you're not going to find a whole lot of time or inclination to sit around and judge others. may this be so, my God's grace.

May this be so for me and for you today. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's pray. Father, your word says, search me, oh God, and know my heart.

[35 : 04] try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting.

This is our prayer. Do your work, Spirit of the living God. And we will give you thanks and praise. In Jesus' name, amen.