

<sup>1</sup>“Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup>For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup>Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck of your brother’s eye. <sup>6</sup>Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you” (Matthew 7:1-6 ESV).

The entire month of April includes the “Sundays of Easter”. These Sundays give us an opportunity to continue focusing on Christ’s Resurrection from the dead which showed that God fully accepted His Son’s sacrifice on Good Friday for the reconciliation of the world. These Sunday’s also give us an opportunity to focus on what Christ said and did during the forty days up to His Ascension.

Christ’s work of substitutionary atonement redeemed us “from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil” (John 1:29; Hebrews 2:14-15, 17). That means He took our guilt and punishment upon Himself (Romans 5:19; Galatians 3:13). It means that Christ has triumphed over death, and since He now gives us eternal life, we need not fear death (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; 1 Peter 1:3). It means that Christ has completely conquered the devil, and therefore, the devil can no longer accuse us of our sins, and we can resist his temptations (1 John 3:8; James 4:7). In summary, it means that when Christ comes again in glory to judge the quick (the living) and the dead, all of us who have been graced with saving faith will not face God’s damning judgment against sin (John 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

God has reserved the right to judge mankind because He is the Almighty God, the creator of all things. So what does Jesus’ command in Matthew 7:1, to “judge not” mean for us? Does it mean that every time someone judges another person, that person is sinning?

In my former church, I once had a Seventh Day Adventist woman approach me after a funeral I did at the request of a faithful church member whose unbelieving husband had died. After the service, the woman came up to me and told me that I was not a pastor—that the Bible tells us not to judge. It was something, she said, that I clearly did in my sermon. In fact, she said that everyone knew where the man was, so I should have lied to try and give the family some comfort. I responded by saying, that if I had done that, then I would indeed not be a pastor in God’s Church. I told her that I am compelled to speak the truth with as much brotherly love as

possible, but never be at the expense of the truth. It is only through the law that a soul is prepared to receive the Gospel. Not rightly applying law and gospel is, in itself, a sin of our sinful nature.

So again, what did Jesus mean when He said, “Judge not, that you be not judged”? It means not to judge hypocritically or self-righteously (vs. 5). It also means we are not to be in the business of judging other people’s private motives.

It does not mean that the Church is to stop declaring the truth of God’s Word. It does not mean that the pastors and congregations of Christ’s Church are to condone public unrepentant sin. The Scriptures clearly state that the Church is to judge those inside the Church when their life is immoral. The hope is that they might repent and be saved (1 Corinthians 5).

The Church is also to judge false doctrine that is contrary to Apostolic teaching (Romans 16:17; 1 Timothy 6:3). Jesus’ command, “judge not”, does not mean that the Church should stop lovingly contending for the truth by such practices as close(d) communion or church discipline, etc. (Matthew 18:6, 15-17; Acts 3:19).

These practices do not attempt to judge people’s private motives or beliefs. Rather, they speak the truth of God’s Word to a known public confession of a church body or to an ongoing public action that is contrary to God’s Word. This is exactly the kind of loving warning and exhortation that God calls us to give (Ezekiel 33: Acts 20:28-30).

In this post-modern age, when the truth is constantly being assaulted, it is difficult to say, “yes” and “no” according to God’s Word. To do so is not to sinfully judge. Instead, to do so is to give Christ’s love to those around us. For without Christ’s love for us, we would all be in the place that the Seventh Day Adventist woman suspected the deceased man of being in.