

THE POCKET JUDGEMENT SEAT

Seventh In the Series On the Sermon on the Mount

By CHAS. C. SMITH

At once searching and condemnatory are the words of Jesus recorded in the first and second verses of Matthew 7: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured upon you." In these words Jesus is telling what should be the conduct of one Christian toward another. He had previously told what the conduct of the Christian should be toward others.

The passage that is the basis for the sermon this week is the first twelve verses of Mat. 7 and these verses should be read before reading more of this sermon. The reader should have discovered by this time that these sermons are not based on just one verse, but on several verses that form the context. Hence, the passages indicated should always be read before the sermon is.

"Judge not" is not in conflict with "By their fruits ye shall know them." We cannot help judging to that extent. Jesus here condemns fault-finding, censoriousness, and attributing evil motives to a good action. Judgment of motives is the particular thing that Jesus here warns against.

Yet, that very thing is indeed prevalent. So many people carry about with them pocket judgement-seats, and when they hear any one say a thing, or do an act, they take out their little private judgement-seat, mount it, and proceed to pass unfavorable, critical and condemnatory judgement. Many are guilty of this, especially toward their leaders, religious, as well as other kinds. As soon as one comes into place of leadership they begin to be suspicious of his motives, thinking that he is trying to put something over on them, or is endeavoring to get some unfair advantage for himself. Let us think:

FIRST, OF THE EVILS OF THIS SPIRIT. 1. It brings similar judgement on those who thus judge. It is well to remember that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Harsh judgements will come home to roost in the lives of those who pass them. Many have learned by sad experience and much heart-ache that the working of this law is not slow, and have come to know that, like Haman, they hung themselves on the gallows they built for others.

2. Harsh judgements passed on also blind him to his own faults. These reveal one to others but they also blind him to his own faults. "Thou that judgest dost practice the same things." He who persists in pointing out the mittle mote that is in the eye of his brother is utterly blind to the great beam that is in his own eye. One who runs a boarding house passed unkind judgement on a brother who delivered milk on Sundays; and the milk man failed to see how his brother could so violate the Lord's Day by cooking for people for pay!

3. Passing harsh judgements brings disharmony and friction. Where people are associated together there can be no harmony where there are unkind remarks made of one of the others. Hence there can be no cooperation in pushing to success the work in which they are mutually engaged.

4. Harsh judgements embitter one's own life. He is dispiritualized—lacking in that fine element which

we call spirituality. It is a sad and miserable condition of mind to have no eyes for anything but for wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, and to take the trouble to find these beneath the surface when they are not visible to the eyes of others.

SECOND, WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR THIS SPIRIT? 1. Self-judgment. "If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." To pass over the faults of others with light eye, and bitterly and harshly judge our own faults, would save us from this evil against which Jesus warns us.

2. Persist in seeing the best in others. "Love covereth all things," means that we will pay no attention to the faults of others, but will look below the surface and find the good points which are surely there, and call attention to them. If we do not know how, then we will

3. Earnestly seek God's help. We will ask Him who giveth wisdom; we will seek this spirit diligently until we find it; and we will knock at the door of tender love until its spirit shall be opened up to us.

4. Faithful practice of the golden rule. The things concerning which others pass judgments on you are what they know little about, and which they do not take time fully to investigate. You would like for others to do this before they pass judgment on you. Then you should do the same thing. James has a fine word here: "Be swift to hear, slow to speak." All of this means that in our conduct toward our fellow-Christians the outcome of asking, seeking knocking—this fine intercourse with God—will be to deal with them in love. He who is born again is born of God; and God is love; and being born of God we, like God, will love; and "love worketh no ill toward his neighbor." In love the tongue of harsh judgment will be silenced, and the word of praise and appreciation of the other will be speedily forthcoming.

THE PRAYER CORNER

"GOD IN NATURE"

We need to consecrate the scenes amidst which we move, the hill top, the thoroughfare. God is not confined to temples made with hands, nor the sacraments of His grace. There is holiness in the common things of life. There is a sacredness in the secular. The heavens declare the glory of God and the earth is full of His goodness. God's voice speaks to us through the heart of our brother man. God sends His messages by human souls.

Our whole life will be a sacrament when God meets us in the company, and on the hill. God is everywhere we may find Him.

A PRAYER:

"Spirit of Christ consecrate the scenes amidst which we move; consecrate the lonely hill top where our soul commensates with Nature; consecrate the roadways where we meet the company of our fellow men.

"Thou, O God, art not confined to temples made with hands nor art Thou limited to the sacrament of bread and wine. Reveal to us the holiness of common things. Teach us the sacredness of what we call secular.

Show us the sacramental glory of the lily of the field. Open our eyes to the divine wonder of the Universe whose miracles we have forgotten. Tell us again that the heavens declare Thy Glory, that the earth is full of Thy goodness, that the storm itself is the echo of Thy voice. Tell us, above all that Thy voice speaks to us through the heart of our brother man, that Thou sendest now Thy messages, not by angels, but by human souls. Our whole life shall be a sacrament, where Thou shalt meet us alike in the company and on the hill. In Jesus name, we ask it Amen. C. D. C.

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