

To Be or Not to Be Judgment Free?—Mark 9:38-50

- **Before scripture reading (Mark 9:38-50)**

“This is a story about Jesus’ disciples becoming judgmental!

And spreading tales about the people they were judging!

And Jesus’ liberating response!”

- **Before sermon:**

“This is a sermon about the good news of the joys of becoming non-judgmental in life.

Making judgments and being judgmental aren’t the same thing.

Making judgments is a problem solving and a decision making process.

*Being judgmental is making comparisons! Harsh comparisons!
Who’s better? Who doesn’t count for much in our culture?*

So the context of this message is, I think, people today judging ourselves harshly—and judging other people harshly!

And how to become free of that.”

“Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him—because he wasn’t following us.”(pause)

“We saw someone....

Isn’t that how the seeds of judging others start?

‘We saw someone.’”

Look what he did!

Did you hear what she did yesterday?

The disciples have become.....tattle tales?

Kinda sounds like it, doesn’t it?

And....we tried to stop him because he isn’t following us.

We’re better!

We’re different.!

He doesn’t belong to our group!

She isn’t part of our.....**clique.**

Jesus must have begun to wonder where he had gone wrong in teaching and training his followers.

And so I imagine him responding something like this:

“You tried to stop him?”

“You put obstacles in his path?”

“You made him feel bad about himself when he was just trying to carry my message to others?”

“That’s not how discipleship works!”

“Being a disciple is not a competitive sport!”

But maybe it is!

Christianity certainly has a history of being competitive!

Especially when it comes to spawning endless numbers of denominations and branches that think they are better because of what they believe, or think.

Or who they let in!

Or whom they exclude!

But why not include?!

Last Tuesday night, I was driving home from the Presbyterian Urban and Immigrant Ministry network meeting, and my eye caught a gigantic billboard sign on Main Street—Judgment Free Zone.

Judgment Free Zone!

That’s the slogan or message of Planet Fitness.

Planet Fitness has branded itself as a place where you can work out without ever being laughed at for the way you exercise or how you look. They promise that you'll fit right in, that it's your gym, and not the gym of intimidating men and women with intimidating muscles or heavy barbells.

With a few changes, that concept might help us as a whole planet right now.

Planet Earth has branded itself as a place where you can live without ever being laughed at for how you look. Planet Earth promises that you'll fit right in, that it's your planet, and not the planet of intimidating men and women with intimidating ideas of what you have to do to fit in on the planet.

That might help a lot of people.

I feel like just about everybody is under a lot of pressure these days.

A lot of people are judging other people harshly.

And a lot of people are judging themselves harshly.

A lot of people are judging themselves harshly because other people are judging them harshly.

“We saw someone....”

Have you ever been judged?

Excluded?

Marginalized?

Have you ever put extreme pressure on yourself, to the point that it really hurts, but no one else can see it?

To be or not to be—judgment free!

Judgment free!

It's the place to see how wonderful God knows you to be!

It's the time when you find you are in God's hands no matter what else is happening.

You pray yourself into God's hands because You trust that you belong in the extended family of God's unconditional love.

Someone may be gossiping about you, but God is looking out for you!

The world may be working you too hard—someone's blocking your way!

Another super pressurized day!

Time to pray!

Wait on what God's got to say!

He'll show you a hidden way.

Because of the competitive world we live in, where everyone is comparing themselves against someone else—

—we're even comparing ourselves against some impossible standard of what or who we think we ought to be or what our life ought to look like—

—we need to stop trying to see ourselves as someone who ought to be better.

Someone who ought to be something else.

Instead start trying to see who God is creating you to be—

—when you come alive to your soul's secret identity.

The real you!

Inwardly free!—to be!—judgment free!

Becoming a mature soul—which is a process of coming alive to the deep part of yourself—

The you that is made in the image of God—

—is not a matter of being better than others— or —when you stumble—worse than others.

I want to close with a timely reflection from an experienced nurse on her experience in struggling to create a judgment free zone in her work!

Tears! Shame! Disbelief! Embarrassment! Pain! Sadness!
Judgment!

I spent over ten years working with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The emotions I listed above, were just some of the many feelings victims had to deal with every day.

In addition to dealing with all of these emotions, a lot of the women I worked with told me they felt judged by society, friends, and family members.

They would hear things like:

Why did you stay with him?

Why didn't you leave?

Why were you out so late?

Why didn't you wear something more conservative?

Why indeed?

Why would anyone in their right mind ask a victim of violence any of those questions?

The questions are full of blame.

It's no wonder victims of violence feel so judged by society, friends, and family members.

I've realized that an incredible number of people walk around with hidden judgment .

And despite intense psychological injuries people tend to judge others for trivial things.

Instead, remember that we're all God's children!

People who are seeking love, acceptance, understanding, and are juggling incredibly complex lives.

Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. ²For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

Amen.

Rev Scott Myers

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