

How Will God Judge Me?

1. Warm up: One of the challenges we face in figuring out how God judges us is our own human approach to judgment. We tend to assume God judges as we judge others. Who's someone you've been tempted to judge this week? What happened?
2. Our focus on Sunday was not about whether or not we, as believers, will get into heaven. That matter has already been settled. The Bible says, "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not the result of works." Ephesians 2:8. Salvation is not something we earn; it's something we accept – God's free gift to all who believe.
 - a. As you look back over your life, when did you first begin to believe in Jesus in a meaningful way?
 - b. Ephesians 1:5 says, "We were destined for adoption as God's children through Jesus Christ." Do you think of yourself as being "adopted" into God's family? What does it mean to say God "adopted" us?
 - c. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." What do you think that means?
3. Just because we're children of God doesn't mean we won't be judged. The judgment we'll experience won't be about whether we'll get into heaven – that's settled. Instead, our judgment will be about how we did in life. Imagine yourself standing before the judgment seat of Christ. Describe the scene – what you imagine it will be like, when you think it will happen, and how you imagine you'll feel in that moment.
4. Standing before the judgment seat of Christ is a pretty intimidating thought. Most of us find ourselves wanting to understand, if we can, what standards Jesus will apply when judging us. Pastor Jeff drew our attention to three key Bible verses. The first is found in Luke 12, where Jesus tells a parable about the owner of an estate (God) who goes away on a long trip and leaves a servant in charge. The servant acts selfishly and recklessly, and ends up being judged harshly. Then Jesus makes his point, "To whom much has been given, of them shall much be required." Luke 12:48. The basic idea seems to be that, instead of being measured against each other, we will each be judged according to what we've done with what we have (and haven't) been given.
 - a. What's something good that you've been given a lot of in your life? Do you feel you're making the most of that gift? Do you think Jesus is pleased?
 - b. What's something you wish you had, but haven't been given much of? Do you think Jesus will be upset with you for struggling in that area? Why or why not?
 - c. When we measure ourselves against one another, it can play with our heads. Jeff shared the example of how inadequate he feels when he measures his shyness

around strangers against Pastor Tandy's warm, extroverted nature. (Remember the Mousetrap!) Who is someone you admire who has gifts you don't. How should we feel in the presence of such a person?

5. Our second key verse is found in I Corinthians 4, where the Apostle Paul talks to the Corinthian Christians about how they were judging their spiritual leaders, comparing them to each other, and deciding who's best. "I like Apollos; he's the best preacher." "I like Paul; he's the best theologian." "I like Peter; he has the best personality." In this context of judging people, being critical of others, and feeling superior to those who aren't as good as we are, Paul challenges us by saying, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" I Corinthians 4:7. In other words, if you're good at something, it's not because you're superior; it's because God gave you special ability in that area of life.
 - a. Can you think of anything you do really well that was not "given" to you by God through some combination of nature or nurture, biology and circumstance?
 - b. If every place in life where we excel is because of how God gifted us, what are the implications of that?
 - c. If every place in life where we struggle is because we were not gifted in that area, what are the implications of that?
 - d. Jeff offered the example of a full-bodied Olympic swimmer, Emma McKeon, who has achieved great things, and a Paralympic swimmer, Jessica Long, who has lived a hard life and had two legs amputated, yet has achieved great things. Which one do you admire most – and why?
 - e. When someone does something great in an area where they're really gifted, how do you think Jesus feels?
 - f. When someone tries hard and manages to be ok in an area where they have a deficit, how do you think Jesus feels?
6. Our third key verse is found in Matthew 19:23-30, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Look again at verse 30. What do you think Jesus meant?
 - b. Jeff suggested that our greatest achievement in the eyes of Jesus might be some area of our life where we've struggled and fought hard, but were defeated. Does anything come to mind from your life?
 - c. Tell us about someone you know who's made much of the little God gave them. If people were lined up in heaven from greatest to least, do you think that person you know would be ahead of, or behind, the Apostle Peter – and why?

- d. Has our conversation shifted how you believe Jesus evaluates you and feels about you or how you evaluate and feel about yourself? If so, what has shifted in your thinking?

Matthew 19:23-30

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁶But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

27 Then Peter said in reply, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" ²⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."