

How Does God Judge Me?

On Sunday, we focused on areas of weakness in our lives, and how God judges us in those areas, using the teachings of Jesus in Luke 21 as our guide.

1. Warm up question: We tend to evaluate ourselves in comparison to the people around us, and assume God does the same. It starts at a young age, as we aspire to be like our heroes. When you were a kid, who's someone you idolized?
2. The Bible has a lot to say about what it looks like to live with excellence. Beautiful aspirational standards are laid out for us. Things like "be merciful," "be courageous," "be hopeful," "be hospitable," etc. Then we look around us and see people who excel in those various areas, and measure how well we're doing in comparison to them. Inevitably we fall far short of these "high performers" in many areas of our life, so we tend to get pretty down on ourselves. "If they can do it so well, why can't I?"
 - a. Jeff told about how his spouse David excels at showing hospitality to people, and how frustrating it is for Jeff that hospitality is something that doesn't come natural to him, even when he works at it, as when he tried to make yeast rolls for Christmas dinner. Tell us about somebody in your circle of acquaintances who excels in a certain area of life in a way that causes you to think, "I'd like to be like him/her, but know I never will be."
 - b. Some areas of weakness in our life seem harmless enough. But other areas of weakness may cause us to feel profoundly frustrated and to get down on ourselves. Examples might include struggling with our weight, with anxiety, with anger, with stinginess, with lack of confidence, etc. In your own life, what's an area of weakness that you find deeply frustrating and discouraging?
3. When we perform poorly in an area where others excel, not only do we tend to feel bad about ourselves, we assume God shares that same disappointment, which is a heavy burden to bear. None of us wants to walk around with a constant sense that God is disappointed in us.
 - a. There's a famous verse in Song of Solomon 2:4 where the Shulamite woman says to her lover, "Your banner over me is love." In Christian tradition, that phrase has often been used to express how God feels about us, which many of us find hard to believe. Instead, we imagine God's banner over us has other "choice words" on it. In your typical way of thinking about yourself, how would you finish this sentence: "God's banner over me is _____."
 - b. When you know another person is disappointed in you, how does it feel to be in their presence? How does your awareness of their disappointment affect you?
 - c. When you feel like God is disappointed in you, how does that affect you?

4. Read Luke 21:1-4. In this passage, Jesus challenges our typical assumptions about how God judges us.
 - a. Why do you suppose Jesus was standing there, watching people put their offerings in the temple offering receptacles?
 - b. As the rich people put their large offerings into the receptacles, how do you imagine they felt about themselves?
 - c. When the poor widow put in her two copper coins – worth about 1 cent in today’s currency – what do you imagine most onlookers thought?
 - d. How do you suppose the widow felt about her offering?
 - e. There’s not much you can do with a penny. Given the small impact the woman’s offering was going to have, why do you suppose she gave anyway?
 - f. Why was Jesus so impressed with the woman’s offering?
 - g. Why was Jesus unimpressed with the offerings of the rich?
 - h. What does all this tell us about how God judges us? How would you sum it up?
5. Luke 12:48 says, “To whom much has been given, of them shall much be required.” We all have areas of life where we’re “rich,” i.e., where we have an abundance of giftedness compared to others. What does God expect of us in those areas of abundance? How much “spiritual credit” do we get with God when we do something great in an area of abundance in our lives?
6. Based on what Jesus teaches in Luke 21, Jeff said, “Instead of seeing our weaknesses as occasions for shame and disappointment, we should see them as the areas where we have the greatest opportunity to live our faith and to delight God by doing that which is heroic for us, even if what we do seems paltry to others.”
 - a. Sunday’s sermon closed with a You Tube Video about Ben Underwood, a blind boy who uses “sonar” to see. As you watched the video, what thoughts or feelings arouse within you?
 - b. When a kid with normal sight hits baskets, we think nothing of it. When Ben hits baskets, we judge differently. If you were judging Ben, how much credit would you give him for what he’s doing? Do you think God judges you the same way?
 - c. Go back to the area of weakness you mentioned in Question 2.b. above. What would it look like for you to be a “Ben” in that area of your life? In other words, what would heroic success look like for you – in the eyes of God – in that area of your life?