

Good evening, we're continuing our series about getting a deeper understanding of who God is. And tonight we come to the Judgement and Compassion of God:

God's anger and judgment / His compassion and love.

Now, the idea of God's compassion and love is very popular and easy to get on with. the idea of his anger and judgement is very UNPOPULAR and difficult to understand. Indeed many Christian's, because they don't understand how these two ideas fit together – get tripped up by it.

They read about the reality of God's judgement in the Bible (and its everywhere) and because they are so used to **only** thinking about God's love, they are shocked by it, it doesn't fit with their view of God and they can get themselves into terrible trouble. They either walk away from God, or they stop reading the Bible, or they simply duck the issue.

Well tonight, we can't do that because in Matthew 11, we come face to face with Jesus proclaiming: judgement AND compassion, all in the same breath. Judgement, anger, hell v20-24; compassion, love and tenderness v25-30 - all at the same time.

How do you reconcile wrath with compassion?
How can you have love and anger in the same heart at the same time?

Well the truth is that not only CAN you have such things, but sometimes you NEED to have such things.

Look, anyone who has ever tried to love someone who is intent on destroying themselves by their own dumb choices - knows how angry you get about it
when you see them take drugs and lose their job
when you see them lie and lose their friends,
when you see them play around and lose their marriage
if you love them – then there is both 'real grief and real anger' at the same time.

The opposite of love is not anger – the opposite of love is **indifference**.
If you see someone you love destroy themselves – and you are indifferent to it, then you don't love them at all!
If you see them dropping out of school; or
staying out all night; or
gambling their money away
There is real grief and anger and love all mixed in there.

Anyone who has ever loved someone who is making dumb choices agonises:
– how do you remove the habit without removing the person
- how do you get them to listen without having to shout
- how do you get them to see without forcing them

Anybody who loves someone and who sees them make bad choices –
Needs to

1) make a judgment about the situation: “this is bad”, and then

2) be driven by a compassion for them mixed with an anger at their self-destructive behaviour

This is what Jesus is doing in Matthew 11

He is standing in front of the world

grief stricken by their choices, angry at the destruction they bring upon themselves, filled with compassion - all at the same time.

To be any different would be impossible.

So if you would turn with me to Matthew 11, p976 let's dive into this a bit deeper. Tonight I want to show you three things about the divine judgement of Jesus. I want to talk about:

the **reality** of his judgement,

the **basis** of his judgement and

the **escape** of his judgment

The Reality, the Basis and the Escape of Divine judgement and how they impact our life.

So firstly,

1. The Reality of Divine Judgement.

v20 reads “*Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent*”.

Jesus began to **denounce** them.

This word ‘denounce’ means to **judge** publically and formally.

It is a distancing of yourself from the person you are talking about because of what they are doing or what they stand for. Because of what they are doing you create space between you and them.

Jesus is standing in front of the people of this world and he is denouncing them, judging them, distancing himself from them.

Now this is not a popular idea.

To be judged by someone is pretty much universally understood to be unacceptable.

How dare you judge me? How dare you think you can tell me what is right and wrong?

These are phrases that immediately spring to mind.

We don't like it!! We don't like being judged

This whole idea is an anathema to us.

1.1 Yet for life to make sense - there needs to be an external objective judge of ‘right and wrong’ for us.

If there is no external judge of ‘right and wrong’ – then ‘right and wrong’ itself disappears.

Look, if we all get to decide for ourselves what is ‘right and wrong’ and then ‘right and wrong’ just doesn't exist!

For if I think *stealing, ... fare dodging, ... tax evasion..., bullying..., adultery, cheating* is right (and many people do) AND there is no-one eternal to appeal to

THEN *who are you to tell me that I am wrong – you have no authority over me! Who are you to judge my actions?*

for if everyone decides for themselves ‘what it is they can do’ then there is no such thing as ‘right and wrong’–

So you say to me “OK, so we will have society as our external authority and judge... Let society set the rules...

but what if **society** says

*‘male homosexual rape is OK as a right of passage’ – as it did in Sparta; or
what if it says that ‘sacrificing your children in fire is OK’ – as it did in Canaan; or
experimenting on Jews for scientific purposes is **good** – as it did in Nazi Germany; or
going to war to remove a non-democratic regime which is anti-west is **necessary** – as it did in the UK;
or growing human beings from test tubes is OK as it is in North Korea*

What if society gets it wrong – who has the right to judge it

Another society? Who gave them the right?

What if the *world* gets it wrong – does that suddenly make it right?

No! For life to make sense there needs to be an authority outside humanity

For ‘right and wrong’ to exist there needs to be an external judge.

For life to make sense there needs to be an ultimate judge.

1.2. For life to be fair – there needs to be an ultimate judge.

For if there is not, then all those people who have ever exploited the weak and stolen from the poor and abused the vulnerable will have got away with it – and will continue to get away with it – because there IS no judge!

If there is no ultimate Judge then there is no ultimate Justice;

And that person in Rwanda who has seen their children killed, their wife raped and then been killed themselves will have no justice

And all those people who have unfairly suffered *beyond tolerance* are without hope.

And how unjust and evil life would then be for so many people.

Anyone who has been hurt needs to know that there is an ultimate justice by which we are judged.

And that evil will not escape and triumph.

For life to make sense there needs to be someone outside of humanity to define right and wrong; and someone who will judge us.

This is what we need – this is what we want.

Amanda used to work as an Auditor.

Her job was to go around looking at how the managers had spent the company’s money.

Suddenly she would appear, silhouetted in the doorway – brief case in hand – rule book under her arm. She was every managers night-mare

Amanda - Auditor & Judge – 007 - Licensed to add up!

The truth is that for businesses to work – for businesses to be fair – there **needs to be** an auditor.

Business: no audit, no enforceable rules – it’s a recipe for corruption.

Life: no judge, no right and wrong – it’s the same.

And Jesus stands before the cities of the world

God incarnate: the one who defines right and wrong, the one with ultimate authority:

And he Judges the world.

He denounces them – he distances himself from them...

And the first thing I want to say, is that for you and me Divine Judgement is a reality –

It's what we need even if it is not what we want.

The Reality of Divine Judgement

2. v21, The Basis of this Divine Judgement.

Jesus says

"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Woe to you!

If the opposite of black is white and

if the opposite of love is indifference;

then the opposite of "woe" is not "giddy up" as someone once said ☺

"Woe" is a word we don't use very often;

Indeed if I said "woe is me" you'd probably just laugh!

Woe is a combination of "grief and anger".

Jesus is standing in front of these three cities and there is a real grief and a real anger at the self-destructive choices that they have made.

He says they are worse than Sodom.

Now Sodom is a pretty infamous city.

It is judged by God in Genesis 18 because of its rampant sexual immorality

But if you look in Ezekiel 16v49, we also see that it is judged for the fact that it was proud, overfed and completely unconcerned with the needs of the poor and needy around it.

Sodom was judged by the things it did and by the things it didn't do.

2.1 This is the basis of the first Divine Judgement.

In Revelation 21v12 we see that every person will be judged according to what they have done as recorded in the many, many books that were opened.

And against this evidence, no-one stands.

Jesus' teaching shows us what is right and wrong.

He says not only "do not murder, but do not swear at each other"

not only "do not lie, but let everything you say be true and fair"

not only "don't hate your enemies, but love them"

not only "give to those who CAN repay you, but be generous to those who can't".

And as we hear his teaching we instinctively know in our hearts that what he is saying is true and will work

We say "if only the whole world were like this, if only the whole world treated each other this way, if only we showed unconditional, sacrificial love to each other"

this will work, it is good, it would stop evil in its tracks!

Jesus shows us "the right, that we long for"

But here is the problem,

the very second, in which we agree and say "yes, that this is how we should be like",

the very moment we admire Jesus for showing us what a human-beings ought to be like
is the very instant that we condemn ourselves.

When I compare myself to the teachings of Moses, of Buddha, of Mohamed
I feel like I am behind the game.

But when I hear what Jesus has to say I realise that I am not even in the same league! - not even in the same
ball-park!

Paul says “everyone falls short of the glory of God
This is the first judgement.

But this is not the judgement by which they are denounced,

Because there is a second book
the real issue (and that which caused the greatest pain in the heart of Jesus) is
that despite God doing everything to get them to accept his mercy and forgiveness and they would not.

2.2 This is the second and final basis of Divine Judgement.

*Jesus said “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have
longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not”.*

Do you see?

*Like a parent pleading with their drug addicted child to stop, to come home, to be loved – they just keep on
refusing.*

And this is the final basis of God’s judgement
it is that God has done everything for us in Jesus Christ – and still we will not repent and accept the
forgiveness that is on offer.

God comes to the world in Jesus
And they will not even listen to what he has to say (hammer blow)

He comes
And they will not even look at what he has done (hammer blow)

He comes
And they don’t accept him as Lord and they say “your ways are not my ways” (hammer blow),
they reject him as God “you have no right to judge me” (hammer blow),
they deny him as Saviour “Your crucifixion has nothing to do with me” (hammer blow).

And God keeps coming – until he is silenced... and
there name is never entered into the book of life,
the second book, the book that makes all the difference

The basis of God’s judgement is not simply that people **can’t** follow his ways,
it is that when they are offered forgiveness and a new start – they don’t want to.

People do not go to hell without choice.
If hell is separation from God – then people choose not to have God in their life

If hell is being unforgiven - then people choose to reject Jesus' forgiveness

If hell everybody doing what **they** think is right – then people choose not to have God as Lord, Leader, Director of their life.

And Jesus stands-outside human hearts, grief-stricken & angry at our stubbornness, **having done everything** – saying “oh, woe to you”.

Look what you bring upon yourself, see the distance between me and you now!

There is an ultimate definition of right and wrong; and

There is an ultimate judgement; and it is based on how we have responded to the grace of God in Jesus Christ – and it will happen for you and me.

3. And finally, there is an ultimate way of escape.

v28 Jesus says “*Come to me, all you who are weary and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest*”.

So to every person who has felt that frustration of not being able to be the person they want to be...

to every person who has been made to feel utterly defeated by the Law of Moses,

inadequate by the 7 pillars of Islam; and

incapable of holding to the 8-fold path of Buddhism

To every person who is worried that they are doing so badly that its odds-on that they are going to be reincarnated into a Hindu warthog.

To every person who has seen the profound goodness of the teaching of Jesus and said

I haven't a hope.

Jesus says “come to me”.

If you've been trying to get it right – and are fed up of getting it wrong

If you've been trying to reform – and realise you can't help falling apart

If you've been trying to get to God - and are just keep missing him

Jesus says “come to me”.

God has come to us in Jesus – so that we can find him.

So if you are fed up getting life wrong,

if you realise that there is a defining right and wrong that is above you

then go to Jesus because he is the answer.

go to him because he says v29 “*put my yoke upon you*”

A yoke is a wooden beam that involves work –

you say, in that case “*put my yoke on you* “ doesn't sound like fun at all!

Yeah, but wait you miss the point!

A yoke is a wooden beam for a **pair** of oxen put on to do work.

In other words Jesus says

“Come to me”, “get hooked up with me” – and you'll find eternal life easy”.

Look, Amanda and I, are always closest to Divorce when we wall-paper together.

We both consider ourselves to be experts

We both consider ourselves to be far more knowledgeable than the other person.

So when we wall-paper it isn't easy.

We are both pulling for our own way.

Contrast that with yesterday when a man called Mark came to fix our patio door.

He was the expert - I knew I was a complete Novice.

I said I'd help.

What I ended up doing was simply watching, as within 5 minutes flat he had the door off its rails taken apart and put back together

At the end he looked at me and said "there we are easy".

Easy for me, because he did all the work.

Hooking up with Jesus is much more like replacing a Patio Door with Mark than hanging wall-papering with Amanda (and not many preachers have said that before!)

The Yoke is easy, because Jesus does it all.

He sets the perfect rules – which are great,

He lives the perfect life – which is beautiful; and

then dies the perfect sacrifice – which is astounding.

The judge himself is judged

The one who made rules pays the price

The only one who walked the talk sacrifices himself that we might know God.

He has done it all!

Can you see why Jesus stands outside the city walls "with grief and anger at their own self-destruction" – anyone who loves anyone would do the same.

So v29 "*put my yoke upon you" and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart*",

Learn from me.

Learn that you do not have to work your soul to death for me – since I have worked mine for you.

Learn from me that I have done it all for you!

Every religion says "try harder, work harder, live better, look more holy".

Jesus says "come to me, watch me, learn from what I do for you and let it be an inspiration and not a burden to you".

Do you see?

Conclusion

Every one of us knows that 'right and wrong' are things defined by someone above us and beyond us.

Every one of us knows that when we hear what Jesus has to say and see what Jesus does – he is right.

Every one of us knows that the only person who can judge us must be beyond reproach themselves

a judge cannot try us for stealing if he himself is being convicted for fraud

a judge cannot condemn us for assault if he is under investigation for murder.

The perfect Judge not only represents the law they must be innocent of it too.

Every one of us knows that when judged by God's standard, when the books are opened, no one will be left standing.

Divine Judgement for us is personal a reality

Yet Jesus stands outside your life and my life; and says

It is the final judgement which is the only one which counts.
How have you responded to the grace of God in Jesus?

So what will you do?

Will you reject the hand offered to you, the arms held out wide for you, the body broken for you.
or Will you come the only one who has done it all for you?

Will you hook up with him, walk alongside him, follow him wherever he leads?

work with him on whatever he is doing?

will you accept his love, his forgiveness, his promise to never leave or forsake you?

The choice is ours and by it you and I will be judged.