

Good morning, it's great to see you!

we're continuing our series going through Matthew and today we come to a place where Jesus talks about the Judgement and the Compassion of God:

The Judgement and Compassion of God.

Now to be honest, the idea of God's compassion is very easy to talk about.

Everyone is comfortable with God's love – it's the sort of thing we're proud to teach our children in Sunday Club.

However, his judgement, his anger is a completely different story.

When we talk about God's anger we can become uneasy, when we talk about Judgment the conversation becomes uncomfortable.

Indeed many Christian's get really tripped up over this, because its hard to see how love and anger fit together.

We read about judgement in the Bible (and its everywhere), we read about God's anger (and that's everywhere too), and because we are ONLY used to only thinking about God's love, It's a shock.

It doesn't fit with our image of God.

And so we either walk away from God, or we stop reading parts of the Bible, or we simply consign the whole subject to the "too difficult pile".

Well this morning we can't do that, because one of the great things about working systematically through a gospel is that we can't duck stuff we find difficult So in Matthew 11, we come face to face with Jesus proclaiming: Both judgement AND compassion, all in the same breath.

Judgement, anger, hell v20-24;
Compassion, love and tenderness v25-30 –
all at the same time.

So the question is, how do we reconcile these two things?
How do we reconcile love and anger, in the same heart, to the same people, at the same time?

Well the truth is that not only CAN we do such a thing, but we must Look, anyone who has ever tried to love a person who is intent on destroying themselves – knows how love and anger mix together.

*When we see someone we love take drugs and lose their job
when we see them lie and lose their friends,
when we see them play around and lose their marriage
if we love them, if we love them –
then there is both anger and grief all mixed in together.*

You see: love and anger are not opposites – the opposite of love is not anger, it's indifference. If you see someone you love destroy themselves – and you are indifferent to them, then you don't love them!
If you see them dropping out of school; or

*staying out all night; or
gambling their money away
and you aren't moved – then you don't love them!*

Anyone who has ever loved someone who is making dumb choices, both
1) makes judgments about those choices, and is
2) driven by compassion to save them
And that is what is happening with Jesus in Matthew 11

He is standing in front of a world that has chosen to turn its back on God, and he is
grief stricken by the consequences of their choice,
angry at the destruction that they bring upon themselves and
filled with **compassion** - all at the same time.

So if you would turn with me to Matthew 11, p976,
This morning I want to show 3 things about Jesus' reaction.
I want to talk about:
the need for judgement,
the basis of judgement and
the fulfilment of judgment

The Need, the Basis and the Fulfilment of judgement and how *each* impacts our life.
So let's begin with,

1. The NEED for 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 deliberate distancing of yourself from the person you are talking about,
because of what they have done.

It is a disassociating of yourself from them.

There has been a lot of that in the news recently, with world political, military and religious leaders wanting to distance themselves from Pastor Terry Jones as he threatens to burn the Koran.

Do you see? they are distancing themselves.

They are denouncing his action as foolish, provocative, unhelpful, unloving, unchristian...

They are denouncing him.

So Jesus is standing in front of people who have turned their back on God and he is distancing himself from them.

He is judging them.

Now this idea of "being judged" by anyone is really unpopular.

As a family, Saturday nights are spent watching X Factor.

I know it's not PANORAMA but hey, the children humour me!

Anyway, after one particularly disastrous audition -

*where the contestant dressed badly, sung badly and danced **unbelievably** badly.*

He said, to the criticism that he was receiving

"You can't judge me" –

"you can't judge me" -

Which seemed to me to display a woefully poor grasp of what X Factor is all about.

The point is: we don't like being judged

The whole idea is an anathema to us.

1.1 Yet we NEED Judgement FOR LIFE TO MAKE SENSE –

For life to make sense there needs to be an **external**, objective, judge of right and wrong, what is good and what is bad.

Look, if there is no external judge of right and wrong – then right and wrong just disappears.

What I mean is this, if everyone and anyone can decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong then there IS “no right and wrong”.

For what I call wrong you could call right, what you call “good” I could call “bad”

If I think (for example) that stealing,... fare dodging,... tax evasion... bullying... murder is right AND

There is no-one external to appeal to

THEN how can you tell me I am wrong!

It's your opinion against mine.

You have no basis, no authority, to judge me

As individuals we need an external authority to define, right and wrong, good and evil.

Now, that authority is usually the society we live in:

Society tells us what is right and wrong.

But what happens when that Society is way off course?

What if society says “*men forcing sex upon boys is the approved ‘right of passage’ for every warrior*” – as it did in ancient Sparta; or

what if it says “*sacrificing your children in fire is honourable*” – as it did in Canaan; or

“*experimenting on Jews for the advancement of science is worth it*” – as it did in Nazi Germany; or

“*attempting to grow human beings in test tubes is clever*” as in North Korea today

What if society gets it wrong?

Who has the right to judge IT?

Another society?

Who gave *them* the right, the authority?

What if the whole world gets it wrong?

What if in one part of the world millions die of hunger while at the same time a few hours away, another part of the world millions throw away food because they have eaten too much?

Who judges the world?

Who defines right and wrong?

Whose judgement is timeless, objective, pure?

For life to make sense there needs to be an external authority outside humanity

For “right and wrong” to exist there needs to be an external judge.

That judge is Jesus.

1.2. Moreover, for life to be FAIR – there needs to be an ultimate judge.

If there is no ultimate judge then anyone who has ever

exploited the weak, or

stolen from the poor; or

abused the vulnerable

will get away with it!

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 maimed themselves will never have justice

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

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

For there to be Justice,
for evil NOT to get away with it,
for right and wrong to exist,
for life to make sense,
there needs to be someone outside of humanity to judge **us**.

1.3 For life to WORK there needs to be an external Judge.

Amanda used to be 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 manager's 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 to hold them to account.

Human experience has told us that if there is no auditor then corruption will flourish.

You know that, and I know that ☺

For life to work, to be fair, to make sense,
there NEEDS to be an external judge to hold us to account.

Even though we don't like it – we need it.

That person is God.

Jesus, God who understands what it is like to be us.

God who made us, experiences life like us, who is one of us.

He is both capable and qualified to be our judge.

And he stands before a world that has turned its back on him and he denounces it.

On what basis?

2. What is the Basis of Judgement?

Well its two-fold, Jesus says

v21 "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!

You know

If the opposite of black is white and

if the opposite of love is indifference;

then the opposite of "woe" is not "giddy up" ☺☐

"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".

So Jesus is standing in front of these people and there is a real grief and anger at the consequences of their choices.

"Woe", He says,

"You are worse than Sodom".

Now Sodom is a pretty infamous city in the Bible.

It is judged in Genesis 18 because of its violent sexual immorality

But it is also judged in Ezekiel 16 because it was proud, overfed and totally unconcerned about the needs of the poor around it.

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

2.1 This is the first basis of God's Judgement.

The things we do and the things we don't do.

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

And against this evidence, against this video replay of everything we said, thought or done

no-one stands innocent.

In the words of Romans "no-one will be declared righteous, not even one".

Jesus' teaching shows us what is 'right and wrong'.

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

He says, not only "do not lie", but also "let everything you say be kind and true and fair"

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

And as we hear his teaching

we instinctively know in our hearts that what he is saying is **true and works**.

We say "yeah!

if only the whole world were like this,

if only the whole world treated each other this way,

if only we all loved each other this way"

This would work, this would stop evil in its tracks!

In other words Jesus shows us "the right... that we long for"

The Judge shows us the way to live – and we know its true.

But here is the problem, because

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

the very moment, we say "yes! this is how we should live"

is the very moment when we condemn ourselves.

Look, when I judge myself against the teachings of Moses, or Buddha, or Mohamed

I feel like I am playing catch up,

But when I judge myself against what Jesus said, and did, and showed us, then

I realise that I am not even in the same ball-park!

I know what he is saying is right

And I know that I fall so very far short of it!

Judge me by society's standards and I am OK

Judge me by Budha's standards and I am behind

Judge me by Jesus' standards, by God's standards, by what I AGREE is right and good

And **I am stuffed and so are you**.

And that is fair and that is right and we can have no complaints

This is the first judgement.

2.2 But it is the second judgement is more important

because one day Jesus stands outside of Jerusalem and says *“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”*.

Like a parent pleading with their rebellious child to come home and be loved – they just refuse.

God offers this world, you and me, his children, those he loves:
free and unconditional grace and mercy

If only we will live with as God of our life
And too many, way too many, freely, knowingly and steadfastly refuse to do so.
And **this** is the final basis of God’s judgement.

God comes to this world in Jesus
And we will not listen to what he has to say (hammer blow)
He comes
And we will not even investigate what he has done (hammer blow)
He comes
And we say who are you to judge us!
I will decide for myself what is right and wrong!

And, as a result of our distancing ourselves from him, he distances himself from us.

The basis of God’s judgement is not simply that people don’t live pure lives,
It is that when offered forgiveness and a new start – they don’t want God to be God in their lives.

If hell is separation from God – then people choose to separate themselves.

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

If hell is everybody doing what **they** think is right – then people choose not to follow God as Lord, Leader, Director of their life long before they are judged to have fallen short.

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 you have placed between us now!”

v24 *“it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgement than for you”*

Because Sodom had never heard of the Son of God coming to them personally

Because Sodom had never seen God crucified because of his love for them

Because Sodom never rejected God like you and me.

We NEED an ultimate Judge
There IS an ultimate judgement...But

3. There is an ultimate Fulfilment too.

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 Buddha

To every person who knows they are doing SO badly at being good that they are most likely going to be reincarnated into a Hindu warthog.

To every person who has seen the profound beauty of Jesus' teaching and said
If you judge me by that, by what I KNOW is right, then 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
If you've been trying to get to God - and just keep missing him
Jesus says "come to me".

God has come to you – so that you can go to him.
And v29 says *"take my yoke and put it on you"*

A yoke is a wooden beam that a pair of oxen put on, to do work.
Jesus says

v28 *"Come to me and you will find rest",*

How does putting on a Yoke give you rest?

*Look, Amanda and I, are always closest to Divorce when we wall-paper together.
You see we both like to be boss when it comes to wall-papering.
So when we wall-paper we both pull our own way.
It's hell!*

*A few months ago a man called Mark came to fix our patio door.
He was the expert - I hadn't a clue.
But I said I'd help.
He said, he'd like that.*

*What actually happened was, that as I watched within 5 minutes
he had had the door off its rails
taken it apart, serviced it
put back together, and
back on its hinges.*

*At the end, he looked at me and said "there we are, easy".
Easy for me, because he did all the work!*

Teaming up with Jesus is much more like replacing a Patio Door with Mark,
than hanging wall-paper with Amanda
(*profound thought of the day!*)

When we team up with Jesus - the Yoke is easy because Jesus does it all.
He sets the perfect rules – which work,
He lives the perfect life – which is beautiful; and
He dies as our perfect substitute – which is astounding.

The judge is judged
The one who made rules pays the price
The one who did it all right, takes the fall,

Can you see why Jesus stands outside the walls of every heart that steadfastly says
"I don't need you"

“I’ll be my own God”

“you have no right over my life”

His heart filled with grief and anger at their stubbornness.

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

Jesus alone, says “team up with me, because I have done it all for you”

And so Jesus stands outside of your life and my life and says

Will you reject my hand offered to you, my arms held wide for you, my body broken for you, my blood shed for you?

Will you distance yourself from me and face judgement on your own? or

Will you team up with me and face judgement with me alongside, who has already paid the price?

Divine Judgement is for every one of us a personal a reality

This is the day that Jesus invites you to choose,

and by that choice we will be judged.

Let us pray...