

Judge Not: Becoming People of Grace

Passage: Luke 6:37–42 | From the series: Luke

Preacher: Cormac Parker Jr. ▾

Date: Apr 26, 2026

Introduction

For the past several months, we've been walking through the book of Luke, chapter by chapter, unpacking his account of Jesus' life. A few weeks ago, we entered a section of teaching called the Sermon on the Plain. Jesus had just come down from a mountain where he had chosen his twelve disciples, and now he finds himself on level ground, surrounded by a crowd, and he opens his mouth. What follows is some of the most quoted and most misquoted scripture in the entire Bible: Judge Not.

Opening

If you've ever been to a big concert or sporting event, you know the moment. The cameras start scanning the crowd. The Jumbotron lights up. A face appears. The crowd cheers. Sometimes it's a dance-off. Sometimes it's a trivia question. And sometimes it's the Kiss Cam.

This particular night, a couple got that moment, just not the way either of them expected.

It was a Coldplay concert. Thousands of people, lights, music, energy, and the camera finds them. They freeze. They don't embrace. They turn away from each other. The crowd feels it immediately. Chris Martin makes a comment from the stage: "They must be doing something they have no business doing." Unfortunately, he was right. This couple was a boss and his employee, both married to someone else.

Within minutes, the internet does what the internet does. Clips get posted. Comments start flying. Theories, assumptions, verdicts. Millions of people watch a few seconds of someone else's life and suddenly feel completely qualified to weigh in on their relationship. And it doesn't stay playful. Within hours: death threats. Harassment. People are threatening their families.

The comment section becomes a courtroom. And nobody in it was elected judge.

That's a microcosm of our human condition, and, honestly, of the church, too. People who claim the name of Christ, wielding the sword of truth, are completely divorced from grace.

While this was happening, I continued to wrestle with the question, "If I were judged the way I judge others, would I survive it?"

Jesus's words in our passage today step directly into that tension.

Luke 6:37

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you."

In a culture of cancelation, how do we become people who extend grace to others?

What Does "Judge Not" Actually Mean?

Right out of the gate, we're in familiar waters. "Judge not." You don't have to be a churchgoer to know this one. People pull this phrase out like a get-out-of-jail-free card. "Don't you know? The Bible says judge not." Which, to be fair, it does say that. But what does Jesus actually mean?

Because if we're honest, we judge things every single day. This morning, you judged whether the milk in the fridge was still good. On the highway, you judged whether to trust the driver merging into your lane. To be human is to make assessments. That capacity isn't a flaw; it's a feature.

The Greek word here is *krino*. It has a wide range of meanings. It can mean thinking through something, weighing the evidence, and coming to a conclusion, something we all do constantly and necessarily.

But *krino* can also refer to a legal verdict rendered in a court of law, a final, binding sentence on the accused.

That's what Jesus is targeting.

He's going after a specific posture: the one where you position yourself as the permanent authority on who someone is, what they deserve, and where they stand. Not to help them. Not to restore them. Just to render a verdict divorced from any possibility of grace.

That's the comment section at 2 AM. That's the person who cuts you off at the light, and suddenly you're the prosecutor. That's the yard sign or bumper sticker that makes you think you know someone's whole story. That's the screaming kid in the grocery store, and the verdict you've already reached about their parent.

Here's what Jesus is unambiguous about: ***We don't get to issue the final word on another person's life.*** That seat is taken. There is a Judge, and none of us is Him.

Scripture is clear: the Righteous judge, God, will judge the world at the end of time. That's more reason why we don't. We are called to stay in our lane.

The Four Commands

Jesus doesn't give us one command here; He gives us four. And they're not separate ideas. They build. They cascade.

Judge not → ***Condemn not*** → ***Forgive*** → ***Give***

Judge not, don't position yourself as the final authority on someone's life.

Condemn not, He's intensifying it now. Condemnation isn't just a verdict; it's a weight. It's the boot on the neck after the gavel falls. The Gospel of John captures Jesus's own posture here: in John 8, when the woman is caught in adultery, not at a Coldplay concert, actually caught in the act, Jesus looks at her and says, "Neither do I condemn you."

Forgive: the image behind this word is of releasing a prisoner from their chains. Canceling a debt and never pressing the claim again. Not because they earned it. Not because they asked perfectly. Because you let it go. My mom used to say, when I wanted to hold on to an argument: "Son, drop the rope." The thing about unforgiveness is that you think you're tying someone else down. But you're the one being worn out by the weight of it.

Give, now it opens up entirely. This is the shift from restraint to active generosity. Not just don't crush people, but pour into them. The same posture that withholds condemnation turns around and extends grace.

Jesus was embodying this in real time. The cross hadn't happened yet, and he was already forgiving sins, touching lepers, restoring outsiders. He wasn't just teaching a way of life. He was the way of life, and He was inviting them into this countercultural new life.

In order to walk into this life, our text encourages us to put down the gavel.

Put Down the Gavel

Think about someone you've written off, filed away, rendered a verdict on. The coworker. The family member. Jesus isn't saying their actions didn't happen. He's saying the gavel was never yours to hold.

What would it look like this week to cancel that debt?

In light of the gospel, what verdict are you still holding that was never yours to carry?

The Promise

Luke 6:38

"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

In the first-century marketplace, a generous seller didn't just fill your bag with grain. They pressed it down, shook it to get the air pockets out, packed it tight, and then kept going until it was overflowing. That's the picture Jesus reaches for.

Jesus is describing a relational economy. What you extend returns. What you withhold, you also lose access to. The measure you use is the measure you receive. That's not a threat, it's an invitation.

When we move through the world as people of grace, forgiving, withholding condemnation, and giving generously, God Himself responds. Not as a prosperity formula. As a relational reality. The God who created everything takes notice and responds to a grace-filled life.

Who Are You Following?

Luke 6:39–40

"Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher."

One sentence. Two verses. Don't miss what He's doing.

He's asking: who are you following? Because you will become what you behold. If you want to become a person of grace, you need to be apprenticed to someone who actually is one. And Jesus is standing right there.

He's not just giving commands. He's saying: follow me closely enough, and this becomes who you are.

The Log and the Speck

Luke 6:41–42

"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

Picture a man walking around with a full wooden beam, not a splinter, a log, sticking out of his face. He's squinting across the room at his brother, tweezers in hand, saying, "Hold still. I almost got it."

The crowd would have laughed. That's the point. The absurdity is the sermon.

This is what scholars call hyperbole, not because the truth is exaggerated, but because the image is drawn large enough that you cannot miss seeing yourself in it.

And if we're honest, we've all been there.

The church member who whispers about someone's marriage while their own home is quietly on fire. The person posting verdicts about someone else's character on social media while carrying wounds they've never let anyone speak into.

I heard about a pastor who was approached after a service by someone who said, "Pastor, we need to talk. There's sin in this congregation that needs to be addressed. You need to start preaching more about sin and judgment." The pastor replied, "I completely agree. So here's what we'll do: write down the sins you personally struggle with, and I'll incorporate them into the next sermon." The person said, "Oh, no, I meant other people's sins." The conversation ended rather quickly. That's the log.

Here's what Jesus is not saying: He's not saying go passive. He's not saying look the other way when someone you love is heading somewhere dangerous. Accountability is real. Truth is real. Discernment is real.

What he's saying is: your log comes out first. So that when you do speak into someone's life, you speak as someone who has stood under the same mercy you're offering.

You're not a judge issuing a sentence. You're a fellow patient pointing toward the same doctor who healed you.

Clearly, that word matters. Log-carrying people don't see clearly. They see through the distortion of their own unaddressed sin, their own unexamined wounds, their own self-righteousness. But the person who has sat in the chair, who has been broken, forgiven, and restored, they see differently. They offer help, not verdicts. They move toward people, not past them.

Face the Mirror

What is the thing that makes you most reactive when you see it in someone else? We so eagerly correct others because correcting them feels better than sitting with it ourselves.

In Scripture, not just reading the Word, but letting the Word read you.

In community, this is why we confess to one another.

I grew up in a one-parent home. My father's life was marked by addiction and incarceration, choices that left a trail of damage. There were nights he didn't come home. Saturdays, when other boys had their dads throwing a football in the yard, mine was behind bars.

When he got cancer, I found myself praying, reading Scripture, trying to hold life together. And it felt like every time I opened the Word, every message I heard, every devotional I sat with, the same concept kept surfacing. Forgiveness.

I argued with God. Forgive him? Do you know what he did? You were there. You saw the nights I cried. You saw what it cost me.

For a long time, I held on to that grudge like it was protecting me. But bitterness is a terrible bodyguard. It doesn't protect you. It poisons you.

And as I was praying for him, God reminded me: *Cormac, I forgave you.*

So I surrendered. Not because he deserved it. Because God was right.

I forgave him. And something broke loose in my soul, a quiet peace, a deep breath I didn't know I'd been holding for years.

And I realized: the whole time, I had been holding the gavel. Placing a verdict over him that was never mine to give.

Maybe you know what that's like. Maybe it's not a father. Maybe it's a friend who betrayed you, a person who wronged you, or a stranger on a screen. But you've been holding the gavel, and it's heavy, and it's not doing what you thought it would.

Here's the good news: We have all been on the Jumbotron. Every one of us. Fully seen. Fully known.

And the only one with the right to pick up the gavel set it down.

He didn't come to condemn the world. He was condemned for it. The verdict was real. The weight was real. It just didn't fall on you.

Closing

Face the mirror: The person looking back has been seen all the way through, and loved anyway. Not the version you curate. The real one. And if you can stand there long enough to receive that, it changes you.

Put the gavel down: Not because sin doesn't matter. Because you've been given mercy you had no right to expect. People who know that don't weaponize specks. They've stood in front of that mirror long enough to know they needed the same grace they're being asked to give.

That's how we become people of grace.