

“Open Up”

Sermon Notes 3/19/17

Matthew 7:1-12

We need to do our own work first.

We need to, in the words of Bob Marley,

“Emancipate ourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.”

Our proper focus is working out our own liberation, not saving others.

So Jesus is asking us to get out of the whole rhythm and dance of condemning and trying to save others.

Yet though we are told not to judge we are still asked to be discerning about people:

READ verse 6.

Know who to trust with what is precious to you,
your truth, your journey, your soul.

How can we not judge people but still be discerning?

Not judging is different than not knowing;

we are asked to know people deeply but not condemn them, not hold what we know against them.

Read 7-11

We are asked to trust God.

We can trust God to be responsive and be with us every step of the way...

This is an invitation to have a personal relationship with God,
even down to the minute details of your life, your daily needs.

This is audacious but very real.

God is cosmic and beyond being a merely personal being,
and yet a personal relationship with God is very possible and very rewarding.

God is not a human being, a father or mother, but God is like a parent
or a dear friend in responding to us with care and compassion.

Those who have tested this spiritually find it to be true.

THE GOLDEN RULE

The Golden rule is all about moral imagination and empathy.

Using empathy, we do the work of imagining what another person is going
through. In this way we can figure out the right thing to do, the compassionate
response in any situation.

And I want to emphasize that it is not always something very big that we are
called to do onto the other. Remember, we are not called to condemn and save
other people...

Oftentimes we really appreciate small things, emotional gestures...smiles, words
of appreciation. Above all, I believe we want to be loved.

We want to be treated with Compassion and Respect, to be given patience when
we err and struggle...we want to be forgiven, to be seen positively.

The message I hear in these teachings is all about opening up.

When we condemn we close up; to have patience with someone is to remain open.

When we seek, when we knock on life's door, when we choose to trust God, we are opening up to possibility.

When we get to know others without judging, when we bring a sense of imagination and empathy to every situation, trusting there is a way forward... we open ourselves wide to the journey of life.

PRACTICE AND QUESTION

When was the last time you followed the Golden Rule and "did to another as you would have them to do you?" Not something you did automatically as part of a routine...but something that took effort and imagination.

I would like to invite everyone to find a partner...and with your partner to share a personal experience of the Golden Rule. This can be either something that you did to another or something someone else did to you, in the spirit of the Golden Rule. Please take turns sharing your experience and how it impacted you.