**Righteous Judgment**

*John 7:24*

**Introduction**

1. It is not possible to function properly according to the will of God without making judgments, even in regard to the actions of other people.
2. Jesus spoke of a ***“righteous judgment”*** that we are supposed to administer – **John 7:24**
3. It is imperative that we know what ***“righteous judgment”*** is, and that we are careful to adhere to that form of judgment.
4. Judgment is a powerful activity which has outcomes ranging from saving ourselves and others from danger, to restoring one who has erred, to even destroying a brother, or disrupting unity – righteous judgment is the key to avoiding great harm, and promoting great good.
5. Judgment with the Right Standard
6. Text in Context
   1. Jesus alluded to a prior event – **John 7:21, 23b**
      1. **John 5:8-9** – healed a man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath.
      2. **John 5:16-18** – they sought to kill Him, and even more so when He expressed His equality with God.
   2. Their indignation was not righteous, their judgment was not righteous.
   3. Jesus shows their judgment to be inconsistent – **John 7:22-24**
      1. Not situational – circumstances don’t determine law.
      2. Not all activity on the Sabbath was forbidden, and they knew that – in fact, some was required (circumcision).
      3. The inconsistency comes from tradition – **cf. Matthew 15:2-3, 8-9** – taking human commandments/teaching over God’s law.
7. **Judge** – *krinō* – properly, to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially) (STRONG)
   1. Distinguishing between right and wrong, good and evil – **Hebrews 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**
   2. Such a distinction is impossible on our own – **Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12**
8. God’s revealed will determines what is material in judgment, and what is right or wrong **– Psalm 19:7-9; John 12:48**
9. Our judgment cannot be trusted without the training of God’s word – **1 Corinthians 2:9-16**
   1. **(v. 9)** – His plan of salvation for mankind cannot be known without Him telling us – including the way He wants us to live.
   2. **(vv. 10-13)** – He revealed them by the Holy Spirit with the exact words – scripture.
   3. **(v. 14)** – the natural man is the one who rejects the Spirit’s revelation – who operates on fleshly wisdom instead.
   4. **(v. 15)** – the spiritual man accepts the Spirit’s revelation, and makes judgment based on it – therefore right judgment.
   5. **(v. 16)** – we cannot know what pleases/displeases Jesus without Him telling us – we can’t presume, and therefore attempt to instruct Him.
10. Opposite – **James 4:11-12** – usurping the position of lawgiver and judge.
    1. *katalaleō* – *kata*, “against,” and *laleo*, “to speak” (VINE) (“speak against,” NASB)
       1. “to speak against one, to criminate, traduce” (THAYER)
       2. Making a judgment on another’s actions as sinful or wrong.
       3. Motive is not ascribed here, though it may usually be sinister.
    2. Speak evil/judge law – not when we make proper judgements according to it (**cf. John 7:24**) – when we add to or take away from it, we judge it as insufficient, or immoral, etc.
    3. EXAMPLES:
       1. Passing opinions as matters of spiritual import or substance.
       2. Projecting cultural mores on others as spiritual requisite. (**cf. 1 Corinthians 11:16**)
          1. NOTE: These need to be respected, and we need to avoid causing others to stumble, but we must not equate such with spiritual requirements.
          2. It must be remembered that culture changes over time, so not only does this make it an unreliable standard, but your sensitivities might not apply to others who have “moved on,” or were never conditioned by such a culture.
       3. Making a matter of our weak conscience in an area of liberty a standard for one who has no such scruples.
       4. Judging from false, uninspired standards.
11. We must remember that the substance is of Christ – **Colossians 2:8-10, 16-17**
    1. Too many times well-meaning Christians cause division and strife due to an ignorance of what is truly substantive.
    2. If it isn’t in God’s word, then it isn’t’ as important as you might think, and certainly isn’t to be bound – **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
12. Judgment with the Right Motive
13. Text in Context
    1. Jesus noted that their interest was not in God’s will – **John 7:16-17, 19, 23**
       1. If they truly sought God’s will they would see that Jesus’ teaching was in accord with it.
       2. If they truly sought God’s will they would not have condemned Jesus for healing on the Sabbath.
       3. If they truly sought God’s will they would not have looked at Jesus with intent to find something with which to accuse Him.
    2. Even with the right standard, the wrong motive will damage the outcome – **John 8:3-5, 7-9** – she was an adulteress, but their motives were impure, so they violated procedure, and showed no compassion.
14. Righteous judgment is entrusted to us in carrying out God’s will – **John 5:30**
    1. Not for self-elevation – **Luke 18:11-12; Galatians 6:3-5**
    2. Not to tear another down – **Mark 3:1-2**
15. Righteous judgment is entrusted to us in aiding others – **Matthew 7:1-7**
    1. **(vv. 1-4)** – manifests an improper judgment from an improper motive – hypocritical judgment.
    2. **(v. 5)** – shows the proper way of judgment, but also gives the purpose of it – to help a brother.
16. Judgment with Contemplation
17. Text in Context
    1. Jesus implied their judgment was superficial – **John 7:24**
       1. They saw Him do something on the Sabbath day, and immediately concluded He sinned.
       2. ***“appearance”*** – *opsis* – properly, sight (the act), i.e. (by implication) the visage, an external show (STRONG)
          1. “the outward appearance, look” (THAYER)
          2. I.e. what is simply on the surface.
    2. They saw, but did not think – many times what appears to be is not all there is.
18. Terribly wrong conclusions can be reached based on judgment according to appearance, and without contemplation – **Acts 21:27-29** – they made an assumption.
    1. Contemplation may include investigation – simple questions can clarify.
19. Righteous judgment does not simply assume the worst, but believes and hopes the best – **1 Corinthians 13:7** – not naïve, but also not quick to pessimistic judgment.
20. Righteous judgment cannot be rash – **Proverbs 15:28** – we must “study how to answer”
21. Judgment with Mercy and Compassion
22. Text in Context
    1. **John 7:23** – their anger was directed at a wonderful deed done to a helpless man (**cf. John 5:5** – infirmity of 38 years).
    2. Their lack of mercy and compassion blinded them to the nature of the activity – rather than seeing something good, and therefore lawful on the Sabbath (**cf. Matthew 12:12**), they simply saw negatively.
23. Judgment without mercy and compassion prevents restoration – **2 Corinthians 2:6-8**
24. Judgment without mercy and compassion promotes partiality – **James 2:1-4, 12-13** – mercy should triumph over judgment.
    1. When we lack compassion and mercy, we lack the ability to override prejudices and inclinations.
25. Discovering sin in others, and making righteous judgment should not bring us joy, but sorrow – **2 Corinthians 7:8-9**
26. Righteous judgment is not made with the intent to destroy or humiliate, but it made from compassion and concern for the one affected – **Proverbs 17:9; James 5:19-20; 1 Peter 4:8**
    1. It does not assume the right to broadcast another’s sin because it is right about it.

**Conclusion**

1. We must judge with righteous judgment (**John 7:24**).
2. Let us make sure we are using the proper standard and motive as we carefully think through judgments, and do so with mercy and compassion.