



SERMON RECAP

FEBRUARY 8, 2026

The Sermon on the Mount: Wisdom Matthew 7:1-14

Wisdom is not easy to nail down. It is learned over time and with experience. It is subject to changing conditions and contexts. True wisdom is not as simple as three step plans or linear progress. As we are drawing near to the close of the Sermon on the Mount, we see that Jesus' teaching is coming to some paradoxes and tensions that can only be sorted out through wisdom.

He is warning us now. After building up his audience with encouragement and blessings, he is now warning against what can happen when we dwell too much in wisdom and life lessons. One of the possible pitfalls of studying wisdom is the ability to see where others are falling short. It feels like human nature for people to get critical of others as their own expertise grows.

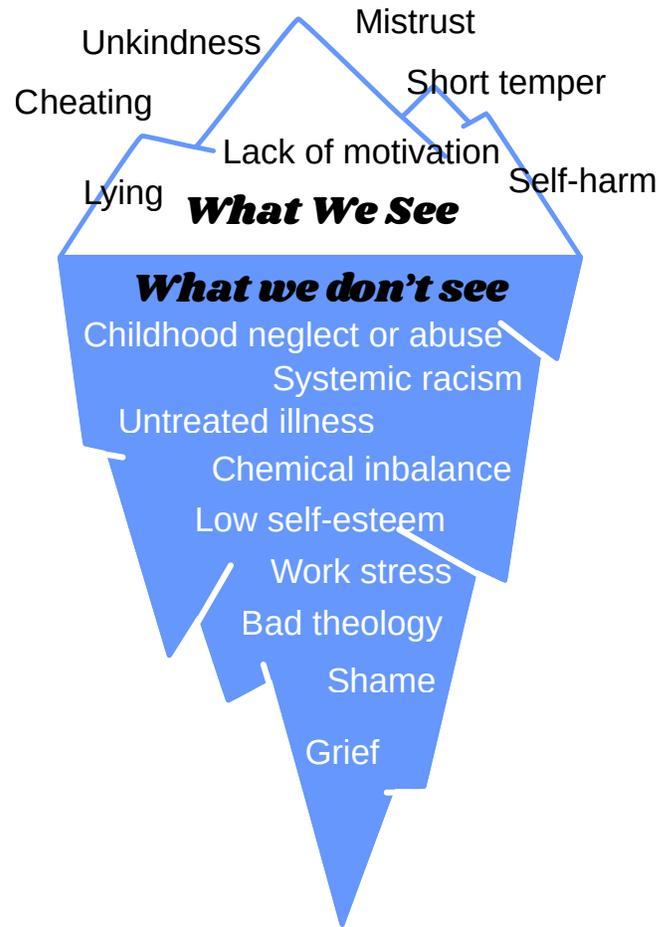
So in this section we have another significant paradox (which is heightened in the conclusion of the text which we will cover next week). Jesus begins with a warning: "Don't judge," yet before this teaching is over he will tell us to be beware of false teachers. In other words, "Don't judge," but also, "use good judgment."

What are we to do? The problem with "Don't judge" is that it can create co-dependent relationships or lead to lack of accountability with important people that do, in fact, need to be judged. "Don't judge" is a dangerous way to deal with leaders who do harm, impaired drivers, spouses who abuse, or parents who neglect. Try telling a police officer when you get pulled over for speeding, "Well officer, judge not lest ye be judged."

We all know that sometimes people need a little judgment in their lives. They need someone to tell them what is going on. They need a dose of accountability. Others however, need a gentle hand, warm compassion, and deep forgiveness. So how do we tell the difference? Wisdom. Discernment. Wisdom and judgment should always be used to help people, not cause more harm.

I see this breaking down in five parts, with empathy as the central principal to it all.

Every person is an iceberg



1. **Don't judge (v. 1-5)**
2. **Use good judgment (v. 6)**
3. **Ask God for discernment about which is which. (v. 7-11)**
4. **Start with empathy. (v. 12)**
5. **Do the hard stuff. (v. 13-14)**

When we start with empathy in our relationships, we can begin to see the underlying context behind someone's actions. When we see someone else's speck, we may miss the log of trauma that they are carrying. Empathy can help us see a person fully.

Empathy is the narrow gate. Anger, frustration, writing someone off, these are the ways of the wide gate. Apathy, comfort, and saying "not my problem," this is the wide gate. Jesus calls us to the narrow gate.

The narrow gate is the self-care, inner work, and reflection we need for a healthy spirit. The narrow gate is sticking with someone with discernment on what they need. The narrow gate is speaking truth to power, raging against the machine when needed, but also doing the hard work of reconciliation when possible. Don't Judge - but use good judgment, lean on God's wisdom and prayer and through it all, lead with empathy.