

~Other Speakers S-Z: K.P. Yohannan:

James and John were furious. These Samaritans had the gall to close their village to Jesus just because He was traveling to Jerusalem. Instead of being overwhelmed with gratitude that the Jewish Messiah would even set foot on their soil, they closed their doors.

Convinced that these heathens didnâ€™t deserve another breath, the two disciples volunteered to call fire down from heaven, like Elijah, and wipe them out. Jesus rebuked them immediately with these words: â€œYou do not know what manner of spirit you are ofâ€ (Luke 9:55).

Jesusâ€™ closest followers reverted to serious carnality just days before His crucifixion. This incident tells us something. In our own selves, when we are rejected or mistreated, we are capable of forgetting all the spiritual things we have learned and responding with judgment and retaliation just like the rest of mankind.

What happens to us that we so quickly look down on others? Along with Jesusâ€™ disciples, we as believers sometimes feel we are qualified and even called to judge others because we think we know the laws of God and are zealous for righteousness.

But Jesus didnâ€™t judge those Samaritans who rejected Him. Neither did He judge the prostitutes, sinners and tax collectors who came to listen to His sermons.

The religious leaders brought Jesus a woman caught in adultery, convinced they had Him trapped. He was a Jew. He knew the Law of Moses. The stones were readyâ€”He would have to pronounce the death penalty over her. But when He challenged those who were without sin to cast the first stone, one by one they left, each convicted by his own failures.

In the end, Jesus, the one and only One who could have passed judgment over her, sent her away with the words, â€œNeither do I condemn you; go and sin no moreâ€ (John 8:11).

What prevented Jesus from judging others? It was His knowledge of the purpose for which His Father had sent Him to this earth: â€œFor the Son of Man did not come to destroy menâ€™s lives but to save themâ€ (Luke 9:56), and â€œHe has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captivesâ€ (Luke 4:18).

Unless we learn to leave judgment to God, we act like a wrecking crew, demolishing lives wherever we go, and do not exhibit the Spirit of Christ.

I remember a massive old building in downtown Dallas, which I passed every day as I went to seminary. But one day, to my surprise, the entire building was gone. I learned that a demolition crew had brought it down within seconds. All that remained was a huge pile of debris, which trucks were in the process of hauling away.

This is a very vivid picture of what happens when we begin to judge others. Unlike our Heavenly Father, who looks upon the heart, we only consider the outward appearance. Thatâ€™s the reason we end up misjudging peopleâ€™s motives and having no mercy for those who fail.

For the same reason, Eli, the priest who was supposed to represent Godâ€™s heart, looked at Hannah in her agony and thought she was drunk. And no one but Jesus noticed the enormous sacrifice the widow made when she put her two coins in the offering box at the temple.

Matthew 7:1â€“5 clearly tells us not to judge because we are not qualified nor called to do so. The consequences of not staying within our job description are much more serious than we think. First of all, we will be judged with the same measure that we use to judge others. But also when we judge, we inflict additional wounds on those whom the Lord seeks to make whole and set free.

God wants us to walk through this world with great spiritual sensitivity and discernment. We should not think that He wants us to close our eyes to unrighteousness. However, instead of judging, He has given us a ministry of compassion. While the whole world was condemning One, that One was hanging on the cross for the whole world. Failure and weakness in othersâ€™ lives should only make us aware of their needs. It should evoke compassion in us and a desire to bring healing and wholeness to their lives. It should lead us to pray and cooperate with Godâ€™s work in them.

Thus, instead of judging and destroying, we become agents of change. We respond as Christ did and in obedience to Him who has asked us to follow His example.

What is your default: judgment or compassion?