Thou Shalt Not Judge…

A friend said something to me about the tone of the internet these days, being judgmental of our President and, as a Christian they though it more spiritual and moral to refrain. So I thought about it for 3 seconds, and responded.

* I have never hesitated to judge my children – because I am responsible for them.
* I never told my Dad to not judge my behavior, no not my Dad. He was on top of it and we had to toe the line. The line was broad, giving us plenty of room to be human, but it was there and his judgment of our behavior was always there.
* I served as a police officer for many years, and I faithfully measured the behavior of others by the law and brought those in need of correction before the courts.
* The courts I went to judged the case before them and pronounced judgment.
* Judgment is all around us, anywhere there is a relationship of responsibility.

Yet, Jesus told us to not judge. How then are we to view this statement? How would we survive in a world without judgment?

The simple explanation is, and I do think this a simple matter, that where there is a relationship of responsibility, we are to judge. What Jesus was referring to was the judgmental attitude of people who, out of their insecurity and fear, gossiped, slandered, and put down others for behavior that was none of their business. It was spoken to those who, out of a Pharisaical context, were devouring one another with judgementalism. Legalism kills when it is the means of rallying the pack to attack the weakest of the group to destroy them. Everyone knows the setting. You may have been a victim of this sort of bullying or you may have participated and later felt guilty.

In any event, the same Jesus who told us to not judge, went into the temple in a fury and overturned the money changers tables and drove them out of the temple. I would like to have seen that! He also confronted the Pharisees, corrected his followers and, well, evaluated, measured and judged.

So, how are we to look at his command in contrast to his actions? Again, it is the issue of responsibility that determines when judgment is demanded and when it is condemned. Parents, police officers, judges, and anyone in authority within the scope of law, has the responsibility to judge, evaluate and deal with the issues present at the time.

But gossips, complainers and busybodies should just leave it alone.

Now the greater application has been for some to condemn those who are criticizing our government and our President and his administration right now. It is growing and it is becoming a major movement. Should they shut up and go away, because they should not judge? When we ask that question we reveal a basic misunderstanding of authority and responsibility. The illusion is that our leaders are above us and have authority over us, therefore we should obey without question or complaint. But that is not America. Let me explain.

Our Founding Fathers were rebelling from the absolute authority of the king and in that wrestling with how to keep that from ever happening again, they established a philosophy of government that reversed the flow of authority. The leader in America does not serve as king or have any more power than we give them. Power flows from the people upward, not from the leader down. So, unlike the monarchy we rebelled against, our system of government places responsibility for our rule, in the hands of the people. We are responsible for the actions and rule of our leaders, and we have not only the right to judge their behavior but the responsibility to do so. We only get the level of truth and righteousness in our leadership that we demand.

But if we are Christians, are we not supposed to avoid politics and honor the separation of church and State? The ‘separation’ is largely misunderstood in our culture these days. It is impossible to make a separation in the terms some would like, while studying our history. Our founders were deeply spiritual men who studied the Bible and made reference to is often. The monuments to their memory in Washington D.C. bear frequent reference to God and to the Bible. There was no separation in their mind and they wrote the constitution. So how are we to see it?

The first amendment states:

Amendment I - Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The clear objective of this amendment is to prohibit government from establishing a state church as was the custom in Europe at the time. It was never intended to keep people of faith from participating in the process of government. If it was, then none of our Founding Fathers would have been able to function as they did. This prohibition has been turned around by some who are antagonistic to religion to mean that the people of faith should go away and shut up. Not so.

The task of the church and of the Christian faith is to be instruments of God in redeeming the earth from the effects of the fall. Therefore we have a responsibility to measure, judge and evaluate the moral and spiritual quality of government and to call it to task when it is damaging the call of redemption.

So those who name the name of Christ as Lord and Savior have a dual responsibility. They are responsible as citizens of the country to hold their leaders responsible for their actions and they also have a spiritual responsibility to hold the spiritual, moral and ethical high ground for God’s plan of redeeming the planet and humankind.

This dual position of responsibility requires that we carefully evaluate the direction of our government and judge it because of that responsibility.

Thanks for judging this presentation…. It’s OK to do so!