



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Devotion Time:
Prayer Time

Week 4: Matthew chapters 7 and 8

Opening Prayer

God of forgiveness, you gave us the law by which to live our life, and you judge us rightly every day as we live by it. Curb our desires to weaponize the law in cruelty against our neighbor, but to instead use the law of love to guide ourselves, to right our relationships with our neighbors and with you. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen

"Do not judge," Jesus says, "so that you may not be judged." It is a line that is very famous. And we quote the line often at each other. It is something we throw at someone who is being particularly judgmental. Just think about how a social media post quickly garners negative reactions or comments, "Oh, you are wrong for posting that", to politely summarize examples of negative comments. And our response back is something that echoes Jesus' words, "Do not judge, you are a sinner, too," or perhaps we use other words that are a bit more harsh.

See the reality is following this rule to not judge is quite difficult. We are always judging. We are judging others for their comments on our social media. We are judging others for what they wear, how much money they make or do not make, how they use government resources, or how they argue against people who receive government resources. We judge cars people drive, how fast they drive, when they turned against the red light or when they held up traffic making me late for a meeting. We judge how a person follows the laws of our nation, we judge how a person is patriotic. Judging is, simply put, so much a part of our human life, it is almost like breathing itself.

So we give thanks for God's grace. For it is only by God's grace that we can get through a day, it is only by God's grace that we can escape the judgment we ourselves deserve. And it is only by God's grace that we can offer grace to another, who also deserves judgment.

Take a moment to highlight which of God's laws matter most to you. List out the ways you have judged another for not living according to those laws. Was it how someone identifies politically? Religiously? Sexually? Was it how someone expressed God's love or withheld God's love? What happens when we truly let go of our need to judge another? How does our life align with God's kingdom coming through Jesus when we realize just how much God has not judged us according to our sins, but instead by grace? This simple nugget is not just words to toss at those we catch doing the judging. This is a nugget is one we will wrestle with forever, and still never get right.

To judge or not to judge that is the question

a popular short video format on many social media platforms now is the "who's at fault" video. You know, where the video shows a vehicle accident, and you, the supposed neutral observer, are asked to decide who is at fault.

Laws say this or laws say that, and we should have a clear guilty party. But, what about circumstances, what about the fact that we didn't see something else not caught on the camera. And just when you think you have the right answer, some legalese is spoken that proves why you are wrong.

How would you feel if your life was scrutinized this way, where someone sees a fragment your life and only one piece of law? Suddenly, you feel exposed, and unable to escape guilt. Perhaps Jesus' words "Do not judge" take on a new meaning now?

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

First Lutheran Church * 116 South B Street * Monmouth, IL 61462

309-734-2106 * office@flcmonmouth.org * www.flcmonmouth.org

Pastor Jamie Gallagher * prjamie@flcmonmouth.org