



**“Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.” So then, each of us will be accountable to God.”**

### **Romans 14:10-12**

I found this week to be a particularly challenging one. Far too many resorting to less than kind words and less than factual assumptions about people, as well as situations. It didn't seem to matter where I was or who I was around, stranger or friend; harsh and disparaging comments seemed to be at an all-time high. One particular conversation disturbed me to the point that I could not contain myself, nor bite my tongue any longer. I swallowed hard and asked the person to stop talking in the manner that they were, and much to my surprise they did. Not only that, they also apologized, admitted that they were out of line, and that it wasn't their intent to sound judgmental.

Most of us do not think of ourselves as judgmental, but the impulse may be nearer to us than we imagine. Perhaps we are sure of our political opinions and sure that the “other side” is destroying the things we love the most. Maybe we are impatient with the way decisions are being made and tempted to think that if only that person were not in the picture, everything would run smoothly. Or we are on the receiving end of judgment and resent the one who decided that we are the problem.

Paul reminds us that judgment is God's work, not ours. When Paul says God is judge, he doesn't mean that God will eventually turn out to be on our side and destroy our enemies. God's dream isn't destruction, but acknowledgement. “Every tongue shall give praise,” says the prophet Isaiah. Even the people we are most tempted to condemn or dismiss will

someday understand God's majesty and loving kindness and respond on bended knee.

But what do we do between now and someday? How do we work to be less judgmental in our day to day lives?

When I was growing up my Dad, on occasion, would say to my brothers and me, "If you don't have anything nice to say don't say anything at all." This was his way of reminding us that as we shared our voices, ideas, and opinions in the world there was a need to keep tongues in check because respect mattered. He wanted us to understand that words can hurt – and that no one has the right to judge anyone as none of us are perfect.

That simple childhood lesson has gotten me out of more than a few difficult situations with my integrity and self-respect intact. But at the same time, it has also been a reminder to keep working when judgments have gotten the better of me and I have failed to show my brother or sister the respect of Christian love.

But what is it for you? What is it that keeps you honest when it comes to passing judgments?

St. Paul was absolutely right; it is not our job to judge other people or to show them disrespect. And that is true no matter how alike or different we seem to be; no matter what perceived side of an issue we seem to be on. I want to encourage you to think about that, as I know I will, the next time the urge to judge seems to rear its ugly head. Let's not just let the words fly and the comments unleash. Let's remember the love of Christ and be true to that love as we work to share our voices, ideas, and opinions in this world.

**Prayer:**

**Dear God,**

**We praise you for the love you have shown us in Christ Jesus.**

**Form that same love, acceptance, and compassion in us,  
that we may not judge or despise our brothers or sisters.**

**Amen**