

## **DANIEL'S DEN**: Judgment days

### **Lenten Symbols: The Gavel**

The symbol of the gavel reminds us to **never** confuse **OUR** judgment – with **GOD'S** judgment.



“God *is* the Judge!” (Psalm 75:7)

Jesus said, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5)

Caveat (warning):

To “Do not judge” does not mean we don’t use common sense, - earthly judgment for earthly offenses. **Jesus is talking about ultimate, final, judgment - God’s judgment** – *we* are not to judge who the Father loves, or who is ‘in’ or ‘out’ of heaven. Those are God’s calls. However, that does NOT alleviate us from our responsibilities as moral beings. There **is** right, and there **is** wrong; there **is** good and there **is** evil. The judgment *Jesus* is talking about is the judgment that **replaces** God’s judgment. [For an example, read Luke 7:43 where Jesus says to Simon in a conversation about forgiveness, “You have rightly judged.” (Luke 7:43)]

Paul agrees with Jesus. Good thing, huh? Jesus says before we judge anyone else let us judge ourselves. Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 11: 28-32: “But let a person **examine himself**, and [then] let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ... For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged ....” And again in 2 Corinthians 13:5: “**Examine yourselves** *as to* whether you are in the faith. **Test yourselves**. Do you not **know yourselves**, that Jesus Christ is in you?”

The symbol of the Gavel during Lent reminds us how very dangerous it is to make ultimate judgments, to sit in God’s place. The more the years add up for us as individuals, the easier it is to see how often our own, limited judgments are, well, often skewed – if not just plain ol’ wrong.

Too often have I heard some people argue about how ‘others’ should behave, how ‘others’ should change, how ‘others’ are going to hell. Never once disposed to examining their own lives; never enthusiastic about looking at themselves; never willing to judge their own lives, never prepared to test themselves. Worried about the ‘sliver’ in their neighbor’s eyes, they go stumbling through life, trying to crawl onto God’s judgment throne and deciding the ultimate fate of others.

As Parish Pastor, Military Chaplain, Prison Chaplain, Hospital Chaplain, citizen: I’ve seen the best that ‘humanity’s’ judgment has to offer. I am seriously not impressed.

I am overjoyed to say with the Psalmist, “The LORD shall judge the peoples; Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, And according to my integrity within me.” Every time I see the gavel during Lent, and how it resulted in an innocent man dying on the cross, I am reminded deep in my soul, that it is the God of Grace who judges me.

See you where I’m so very glad that God is my judge – and you are not.

Pastor Dan