

26-0920p Transcript

26-0920p - *The Way That Seems Right*, Scott Reynolds

Bible Reader: Mike Mathis

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The Way That Seems Right

Scripture Reading

Scripture Reader: (0:04 - 0:29) Mike Mathis, Proverbs 14:12: (0:04) <i>The scripture reading for this evening is from Proverbs 14 verse 12, which reads, (0:17)</i>	Scripture continued <i>There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (0:27) And that completes the reading. (0:29)</i>
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Transcript (0:04 - 18:29), Preacher: Scott Reynolds

(0:34) The way that seems right.

There is a sentence in Proverbs so important (0:40) that the Holy Spirit let it be written twice. There is a way which seems right to a man, but (0:48) its end is the way of death. You hear it in Proverbs 14, 12.

You hear it again in Proverbs 16, (0:57) 25. Same word, exact same word, same warning. And then a few chapters later, the companion line (1:05) that explains why the warning has to be repeated.

Every man's way is right in his own eyes, (1:15) but the Lord weighs the heart. And that's the trouble. Not that we cannot tell right from wrong (1:23) when we're looking at someone else.

We are often quite skilled at that. The trouble is (1:29) that our own way looks right to us. It feels wise.

It feels justified. It may even feel (1:37) spiritual. And the Lord is not weighing the story we tell ourselves.

He's weighing the heart. (1:45) This evening, I want us to stay with that warning long enough for it to reach us (1:52) and not those people, not the culture out there, but those of us who are sitting in this room. (2:00) If the Proverbs is telling the truth, then the most dangerous path in Cleveland this week may (2:06) not be the one that looks obviously wicked.

It may be the one that seems right. The way that seems (2:16) right. Notice how carefully the proverb is worded.

It says there's a way that seems right. (2:25) Appearance and reality are not the same thing. A path can feel moral, responsible, even biblical, (2:33) and still end in death.

It's hard for us to accept because we live by what seems right. (2:41) We make decisions by how the

thing sits on our conscience at the moment. We defend ourselves (2:47) by the reasons that sound best in our own ears.

And Proverbs says that habit is not a rare failure. (2:55) It is the ordinary condition of the human heart. Every man's way is right in his own eyes.

(3:04) Now that does not mean that there is no such thing as a right way. (3:09) Scripture is full of a right way. Jesus calls himself the way.

The question is whether we will (3:17) submit our way to the Lord who weighs our hearts or whether we will keep treating our own eyes (3:24) as the final court. The Lord weighs hearts, not reputations, not the version of the story that (3:32) makes us look careful and the other person look careless. It's hearts.

That is why this sermon (3:39) cannot begin with a list of other people's sins. If we start there, we have already proven (3:47) the proverb. We have already chosen the way that seems right.

So let the first work of this hour (3:56) be simple and searching. I am capable of building a life, a habit, an opinion, even a ministry that (4:05) seems right to me and is not right before God. So are you.

Until that sentence is allowed to stand, (4:13) Jesus' next teaching will only be a saying we use on other people. The beam and the speck. (4:23) Jesus takes that proverb and puts a picture on it that nobody can forget.

Matthew 7 verses 3-5. (4:34) Why do you look at the speck that's in your brother's eye, but you do not notice the log (4:40) that's in your own eye? Or how can we say to your brother, or how can you say to your brother, (4:47) let me take the speck out of your eye and behold, the log is in your own eye, you hypocrite. First, (4:56) take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your (5:03) brother's eye.

We've heard that so often that it can slide right past us. Slow down and listen to (5:12) what he does not say. He does not say there is no speck.

There may well be a speck and brothers (5:21) do sin, sisters do wander, congregations do need correction. He does not say that we must never (5:29) help a brother. In fact, the last line of the saying assumes that helping is part of love.

(5:37) He does not say that all judgment is forbidden, as if Christians were required to pretend that (5:43) nothing is ever wrong. What he says is that the order is wrong and the would-be fixer is broken. (5:54) The man with the log in his eye is not merely imperfect, he cannot see.

And a man who cannot see (6:03) is the last person who should be leaning over someone else's face with a sharp instrument (6:09) saying, hold still, I'll fix you. That is why Jesus uses the word hypocrite. The issue is not (6:20) only that we have a fault, the issue is that we appoint ourselves as surgeons while we are still (6:27) blind.

The attempt to help becomes an act of blindness dressed up as concern. (6:35) And Luke records the same saying, and he will not let us treat it like a slogan. (6:40) Just before the speck in the log, he says, a pupil is not above his teacher, but everyone (6:48) after he has been fully trained will be like

his teacher.

That changes the standard. The question (6:55) is not who in this room has the sharper eye, the question is under whom are we sitting? (7:03) We become like the one we listen to. If we sit under our own heart, we will reproduce our own (7:10) log.

We will call it discernment, we will call it standing for truth, but it will still be our own (7:17) looking at things in our own eyes. If we sit under Christ, we begin to learn his way of seeing, (7:26) and his way of seeing always starts with the log and the one who wants to help. (7:33) Then Luke sets the same next to the tree and the treasure.

There is no good tree which produces (7:41) bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known (7:49) by its own fruit. And then the good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what (7:57) is good, and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil, for his mouth speaks (8:06) from that which fills his heart.

You hear how close that is, the Proverbs 21 to the Lord weighs (8:14) the hearts? The mouth reports the inventory. Judgmental speech is not first a technique (8:21) problem. It is not that we need a gentler tone while we keep the same treasure.

The mouth is (8:29) telling the truth about what fills the heart. What we notice, what we excuse, what we condemn, (8:36) and what we cannot stop rehearsing, those things are fruit, and they tell on the tree. (8:43) So when the first thing that rises in a conflict is the other person's speck, (8:55) we should assume a log is already in place, not because the other person is innocent, (9:02) but because our eyes have already chosen a way that seems right, the measure you use.

(9:11) Jesus applies the same principle to listening and measuring, Mark 4, 24 and 25. (9:21) Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure, it will be measured to you, (9:26) and more will be given to you besides.

For whoever has, to him more shall be given, (9:32) and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. There are two warnings in (9:39) that, and both of them belong with the log and the speck. The first is that the standard you apply (9:49) to others is the standard that will be applied to you, and then some.

We like a tight measure (9:57) when we're looking at a brother. We like a generous measure when we're looking at ourselves. (10:05) Jesus will not let us keep two sets of rules or scales.

The measure you use is the measure you (10:12) receive. And the second is that spiritual sight is not a fixed possession. It grows or it withers.

(10:21) The one who receives the word with a humble measure is given more light, and the one who (10:27) uses the word as a weapon against others begins to lose even the light he thought he had. (10:34) That's a fearful thing. A man can start with real truth in his hand, and by the way, (10:41) he measures other people, becomes less and less able to see.

This is why the person with the log (10:49) often feels so sure of himself. He thinks he is discerning. He thinks he is the one who takes, (10:56) still takes scripture seriously.

Jesus says he's using a measure that will come back on his own (11:03) head, and if he keeps using

it, he will not only stay blind, he will grow (11:13) blinder. So take care what you listen to. Take care how you measure.

The Lord who weighs hearts (11:21) is not impressed by how quickly we can spot a speck. You who pass judgment do the same things. (11:31) Paul takes the proverb and the saying of Jesus into the courtroom of the gospel.

You, therefore, (11:38) have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, (11:45) you are condemning yourself because you who pass judgment do the same thing. Romans 2 is not a (11:52) command to stop telling the difference between good and evil. Paul has just finished a long (11:58) indictment of the unrighteous.

He knows evil when he sees it. What he will not allow is a man (12:05) who uses God's law as a mirror for everyone else and a shield for himself. God's judgment, Paul (12:14) says, is according to truth, not according to our comparisons.

We are very good at comparisons. (12:22) At least I'm not like that. At least our congregation doesn't do what they do.

(12:28) At least my sin is not as loud as his, and all the while the Lord is weighing the heart. (12:35) Then Paul asks the question that should stop a religious person in his tracks. (12:41) When you pass judgment and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment, (12:48) or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, (12:54) and realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? (13:00) That is one of the most searching sentences in the letter.

Kindness is not God saying (13:08) to you. The law does not matter. Kindness is God giving you time to take it out.

(13:16) If you use that time to keep talking about someone else's speck, you're not merely being (13:22) inconsistent. You are treating the kindness of God with contempt. And a stubborn, unrepentant heart, (13:30) Paul says, is not standing still.

It's storing up wrath for the day when God's righteous judgment (13:38) is revealed. God will repay each person according to what they have done, to those who by persistence (13:46) in doing good, seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. To those who are (13:54) seeking and reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger, (13:59) trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.

First for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (14:06) Glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good. First for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

(14:13) For God does not show favoritism. No favoritism. Not Jew or Gentile, not church member or outsider, (14:21) not preacher or pew.

The log is not only a large sin I have not noticed yet. (14:29) The log is often the act of judging itself while the same pattern lives in me. Pride, harshness, (14:36) a selective memory, a way that seems right.

That sounds too close. It's supposed to. (14:44) Romans was written to people who already knew the

Bible.

(14:49) Jesus does not leave us in the dark about what to do. He gives an order and it's the only order (14:55) that works. First, notice the log.

That will not happen by staring more intently at your brother. (15:05) It happens when we submit our way to the Lord who weighs hearts. It happens when the word is (15:12) allowed to read us before we use the word on anyone else.

Then take it out. That is not a (15:19) feeling. That is confession.

That is repentance. That is the humility of a pupil who still needs (15:25) the teacher. In the language of this congregation, it is the same honest turning we have always (15:32) preached.

The heart coming from under the authority of Christ, the old way abandoned, (15:37) the new way walked, baptism, and a faithful life are not badges that exempt us from Romans 2. (15:46) They are the beginning of a life in which God keeps weighing the heart. (15:51) Then and only then you will see clearly. Clarity is not a personality trait.

It is not the prize (15:59) for being the sharpest critic in the room. Clarity is a gift that follows repentance. (16:05) Until the log is out, your hands are not safe near anyone else's eye.

(16:13) Then take the speck out. And yes, love does that. Restoration becomes possible because the helper is (16:21) no longer a hypocrite.

He's a fellow sinner who has been shown mercy. He does not come with a (16:28) beam still in place and a verse in hand. He comes having first sat under the same judgment.

He is now (16:36) asking his brother to hear. That's the gospel order. Not because we have nothing to say to (16:43) one another, but because we have something true to say.

And the only people who can say it (16:48) without doing harm are the people who have already let the Lord deal with them. (16:55) So I want to bring this home without softening that. If your first instance in a hard conversation (17:02) is the other person's speck, assume a log is already in place.

If God's kindness has not been (17:09) leading you to repentance, you may be treating that kindness with contempt. If you have been (17:16) using Scripture mainly as a measure for others, take care that measure you use is coming back. (17:23) And do not trust the way that seems right simply because it's yours.

(17:28) The Lord weighs the heart, first the log, then and only then the speck. And even then, (17:34) with the humility of a pupil who is still becoming like his teacher. If you need to name a log this (17:42) evening, name it before God.

If you need kindness that leads to repentance, it is still being held (17:49) out. If you've been waiting for someone else to change before you deal with what the Lord has (17:55) already shown you, the proverb has already described the end of that way. There is a (18:00) way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

There is also a teacher who (18:07) still makes pupils able to see. Sit under him, let him weigh the heart, and then you will see (18:14) clearly. And then, by his mercy, you may actually be of use to a

brother.

(18:22) And that's what I got. The invitation is being extended to anyone who's subject to it. (18:29)