

# Being a Friend of the Judge

*"Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."*

*John 7:24 (NIV)*

I am privileged to be friends with some men who are provincial court judges here in Ontario. I knew these men before they were judges, when they practiced law and faced a judge on behalf of their clients. Occasionally I have been in the courtroom when one or another of my friends was the judge on the bench and observed them as lawyers pled their cases. The whole thing was so fascinating.

I have been in the homes of these judges, I have had meals with them, I have watched football with them, we have even gone for long walks and discussed life and the issues facing our society today.

You need not wonder if I would want the power they have to make pronouncements about people being guilty or not guilty. I would never wish to have such authority. Being in a position to judge a person and then pass sentence on the guilty seems dreadful, frightening and very undesirable.

Yet, in our ordinary pursuits in life we can be very ready to act as judge and jury on individuals and reckon them guilty and worthy of punish-

ment. Perhaps you are surprised by what I say but is it not common enough to speak about someone in such a way as to condemn them of various wrong doings?

When we hear of a couple separating and getting a divorce we often immediately decide that one or the other is the guilty party. We make assumptions not knowing the detail. We jump to conclusions too easily. Or we may hear of someone falling ill. It is possible we think it a judgment of God upon them. So we condemn the person without cause.

If we would not want to be the judge in the courtroom, why is it that we make such judgments on others so readily outside the courtroom? Our statement today from Jesus' lips concerned the matter of religious leaders accusing Him of not keeping the Sabbath because He had healed a man on the Sabbath. They thought Jesus should have waited for the next day to do His healing. His "crime" was that He broke one of their man made rules.

Those accusers of Jesus were very angry with Him because He did not follow their strict

rules about how to live before God. Jesus accused them of judging by external appearances and not by learning the person's heart. Sometimes we Christians can reject other believers because they do not follow the rules we lay down for them.

For example if a young man wears an earring some Christians will jump all over him for his "sin". They are doing what Jesus told us not to do. They are judging the man by "mere appearances". How many tender believers have been driven from our midst because we sit in judgment on them for something as silly as an earring. When we stand before God in judgment there will be far more pressing issues to answer for than if we wore an earring or not.

If you are someone who has judged wrongly, go to the person and confess your sin. If you have been treated like Jesus was in our passage, rejoice that you are in His company! Better to be judged as Jesus was and walk with Him than to be politically correct according to the believers who think that they are the only ones who have it all together.