

## **“Unqualified Judge”**

Rev Walt Wellborn

Imagine yourself in a court of law. You are part of a pool of defendants facing a variety of different offences. You yourself are there for a traffic violation. For whatever reason, perhaps you were distracted by your phone, but you did not see the stop sign and cruised through an intersection. But the officer in the patrol car nearby saw what you did and pulls you over. She has your indiscretion on her dash cam. You try explaining what happened, but she still gives you a ticket and says, “You can tell it to the judge.” When your day arrives to be in court, you are there on time and you are the first one called. The judge finds you guilty and encourages you to pay your fine and court costs. The person after you also has a traffic citation, and the judge does much the same thing. But the third person is accused of panhandling, and he truly looks the part; ragged clothes, long hair, unshaven, dirty. However, the judge has pity on him and lets him off with a warning. This makes you very angry. It's obvious the guy is guilty and undeserving of the mercy that the judge has shown, so you rush up to the bench, push the judge out of the chair, and you tell everyone in the courtroom that you can do a better job as you take the judges seat and pound the gavel.

How many of you have had this experience or seen this happen? What? No one? You tell me that there is no way that bailiff would allow that to happen in a courtroom. And yet... we do it every day.

“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?” James 4:12 (NIV)

**There is James, not dancing around the issue but very much in our faces pointing out how ridiculous we are as well condemn our neighbors because they don't meet our criteria for law abiding Christians. Often, we don't even consider that they might not be Christians. After all, everyone should live by Christian standards, right?. It is our hubris that leads us to believe that we have the right, nay, the obligation to sit in judgement of the people around us. That very same hubris that self-inflates our importance seems to somehow lead us to believe that we have every right to kick Jesus off his judge's bench because we think we are somehow better qualified than him to pronounce judgement on our neighbors. "Widow Jones' grass is getting too tall!" "Mr. Barns shouldn't be smoking in public. He's a teacher, after all!" "I caught Sam buying beer at the grocery the other day." "Maggie really should spend more time at the beauty parlor." "That lady picking up food at the food bank sure drives a nice car for someone in need."**

**And those are just a few of the minor things that we harp on about thinking we are taking some of the stress off of Jesus because he's just too busy to judge everyone. It's obvious because so many people get away with these kinds of things.**

**God does not call us to sit in judgement of anyone. He calls us to love one another and take care of one another. Instead, maybe we should think about volunteering to mow the Widow Jones' lawn, inviting Mr. Barns to go fishing to help relieve his tension, invite Sam over for a barbecue on Saturday, invite Maggie to join you for a ladies' day out, or even volunteer at the food bank.**

People don't change because we sit in judgement on them. We tell ourselves we aren't judging them. That the Bible is doing that. However, my dear friends, the Bible doesn't judge anyone either. The Bible is not a living entity and doesn't replace Jesus in the courtroom. Our responsibility is to love and pray for people, to lift them up to God without personal judgement. We are each unique souls as we stand before our maker. As we read in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (NIV). Let us always seek to fall on the side of Love and Grace.