

**Series: Give Up!**

**Sermon: Give Up Blaming**

**Luke 6:37-42** (NIV)

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

39 He also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

41 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

**Romans 2:1** (NIV)

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

### **Sermon**

One of the joys I have right now is that I have children. Yes, many consider it a joy to have children for children’s sake, but I also enjoy the utilitarian value that they bring. When you hear across the house the familiar chant, “Who left the toilet seat up?” There are now four of us to blame. Before children, I had nowhere to hide. The answer was obvious. “Dad, have you seen my homework? I left it on the table” Nope. Not my fault. “Dad, why did we miss our connecting flight?” Confusion on time zone changes. That one happened 10 weeks ago. We’re good at being blame-shifters. We blame fast food restaurants for making us fat. We blame tobacco companies for giving us cancer. We blame the church for our lack of spiritual growth. We blame God for the results of our poor choices. But the question is: do we consider ourselves better off because of playing the blame game? What does playing the blame game really accomplish for us?

So let’s play the "Blame Game": You are driving 75 mph in a 55 mph zone. You are pulled over and given a ticket that gives you enough points to have your license suspended. Who is to blame? Not you. It’s the officer’s fault; he should have been a little more sympathetic to your situation. You pull through McDonald’s for some hot, yes hot coffee. While trying to drive your car and eat your Egg McMuffin, you spill your hot coffee all over yourself. Who is to blame? Not you. It’s McDonald’s fault for making that coffee too hot! How about this one: a man decided to try a stunt that required him to swallow razor blades. He ended up at the hospital for emergency care and a huge bill. He took responsibility right? Guess again. He ended up suing the hospital for subjecting him to harmful radiation during x-rays. Unfortunately we live in a society where it’s not only acceptable, but also profitable to shift the blame. But does this mean it’s acceptable and profitable in God’s eyes? It’s hard for us to accept blame. It’s a defense mechanism to keep us from having to deal honestly with our mistakes. We see it in sports. Athletes blame their poor performance on anything and everything. It was my equipment, it was my teammate, it was the field, etc. We see it in politics where they play ‘pass the buck’. Fifty years from now, God willing I’m still here, something won’t go right and I’ll lean over to Steph and say, “It was Obama’s fault”. We find the blame game being played just about everywhere; including the Bible.

We see it in Genesis. Eve blamed a snake. Adam blamed Eve. Adam, “Don’t blame me, I didn’t take the fruit

from the tree; she gave me some fruit and I ate it. I wouldn't have eaten it if it hadn't been for that woman." Eve, "Don't blame me. I was tricked into eating it. I wouldn't have eaten it if it hadn't been for that serpent." So how can they be held responsible? A) They knew the rules - eat anything except whatever comes from this one tree. B) They had a choice. Since they knew the rule and the consequence for breaking that rule, they were given fair warning and therefore, left without excuse. The serpent played a role in Eve eating the fruit and Eve played a role in Adam eating the fruit but ultimately, the choice was each of theirs. They didn't have to give in. They had all the power necessary to resist temptation. They just had to stay away from one tree. Adam and Eve had a choice-obey God or disobey God. And they chose to disobey Him. If we're in Christ, we have the ability to choose right or wrong. We can do wrong and say we had no choice but that's not true. 1st Corinthians says that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. But when we are tempted he will provide a way out.

Later on God probably blamed himself. It says this, "The Lord grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain." Sounds like regret. My bad. Shouldn't have made humans, sorry planet. And we get the flood.

Another guy, next book in the Bible, Exodus. Moses' brother Aaron makes a golden calf. Aaron's like, "Hey, these people wanted a god. You know how they are; what was I supposed to do? You were gone, up on that mountain all this time; don't blame me. In fact, blame the furnace because all I did was throw the gold in there and out came this calf." I'm not elaborating. That's what he said.

We will go to great lengths to try to shift the blame. We concoct elaborate stories to keep from owning up to our wrongdoing. Then, when the heat is on we need to come up with new lies to collaborate with the old lies. What a tangled web we weave when our desire is to deceive. What planks we have in our own eyes!

Another way the blame game is played is when we get caught at something, and our first response is, "Who told?" Instead of accepting responsibility, we want to know who blew the whistle. As if to say, 'If it wasn't for them telling on me, I wouldn't be in this mess.' No, if it weren't for our actions, we wouldn't be in this mess. We need to stop blaming the one who did the right thing when we do the wrong thing.

We have this tendency to blame our parents for all our defects of character. And don't get me wrong; parents are responsible for raising their children the correct way. And many of the traits we produce are learned behaviors we saw displayed through our parents' actions. But, there comes a time when we have to stop blaming them and start accepting responsibility. Many of us suffer from the victim mentality. Our society tells us that we don't have to take responsibility for our actions. We can blame someone else. You don't have to accept any responsibility; you are the victim. We continue to sin and blame it on what happened to us years ago. I can't go back to church because I was hurt there before. I can't shake this habit because it's been going on for so long. I can't stop feeling sorry for myself because everybody else is against me. Although there are no doubt things that happened to us in the past that were beyond our control, where someone else was to blame, that doesn't give us a license to make poor choices today.

Sometimes, we also play the blame game with God. We say things like, God, if I had more money I would tithe. God, if I had a car I could find a job. We blame God for not dropping things into our lap. 'Well, God, don't blame me. I tried a couple of times and nothing happened so I guess you don't want me to succeed.' Or, "Well, God, I tried to wait but you're not moving fast enough so I guess I'll have to do it myself." So when we act, or fail to act according to God's will and it doesn't work out, it's God's fault. The reality, however, is we're to blame if we don't seek God's direction or accept God's timing. I prayed that one time and it didn't work. Too often we're quick to blame God when things go wrong and slow to thank him when things go right. God, why do you allow so much evil in the world? Sometimes this is asked in an inquisitive manner, but sometimes it's asked in an accusatory manner. In spending time pondering and trying to answer this question before, there

was one point that I realized I had overlooked. Instead of blaming God for allowing evil, our attitude should be thanking Him that it isn't worse. Maybe this is glass half full thinking. When God allowed Satan to go after Job, he allowed him to go only so far. This goes a little too weird for me, but someone once told me that Satan is on God's leash. If God took Satan off his leash there would be a surge of unimaginable evil inflicted upon us all. Playing the blame game with God keep us from understanding and appreciating God. Choose happiness, not because of the blessings that have come your way, but choose happiness despite the hardships that you face. What's your other choice?

And yes, sometimes, many times, there are others to blame. Someone goes thru a red light and whacks your car send you to the hospital. Yeah, I can blame others. A spouse destroys the marriage by sleeping around. Yes, there is blame there. A parent steals their kids identity to qualify for a mortgage, there is blame there - and it made for an awkward counseling session. But what I've learned is this: There is no peace in finger pointing and making others responsible for how you feel and what your life looks like - even it happened! As long as we blame others for your unhappiness, you will always be unhappy. Here's what happens: When we play the blame game, we literally hand over our happiness to the control of other people. Let that sink in. We hand over our happiness to the control of other people. That's what happens, doesn't it? I'll never be happy, I'll never find joy, I'll never be at peace - unless you allow me to be happy. Is that how you want to live your life?

Playing the blame game doesn't make matters better; it makes them worse. When we blame others we avoid taking responsibility for our actions and when we do that, we will never grow. When we blame others for their actions, that's all well and good, but it doesn't change the outcome - and we hold bitterness and resentment - not the recipe for a quality life. And when we blame God we see Him incorrectly and we fail to see Him for who He really is - a loving God whose desire is to see us stop blaming and start living a blameless life. Give up Blaming! If you still want to blame others, then you'll have to listen to next week's sermon: Give up Complaining. And the family of God said, AMEN.