

WEEKLY SERMON

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Judged, by a judge, in Waitrose

As many of you reading this column will be aware, the Bible teaches us not to be quick to judge others.

It also teaches us to “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.”

But, sometimes people make it REALLY difficult!

Last week I was doing some shopping in Waitrose.

I was in the fruit aisle, making my choice like you do.

A young woman, maybe 30-35, is getting closer and closer to me.

She’s at my shoulder. Then she’s reaching across me like I’m not even there.

At the appropriate ‘too close’ moment I enquire if she is going to get any further into my personal space.

"You’re in my way," she says.

"Very sorry about that," I respond, "didn’t realise you had priority ... please forgive me."

The woman shoots back: "I don’t talk to people like you."

(I’m a big Glaswegian and maybe she also heard my Glasgow accent - sorry to say even now some people don’t like it and make quick judgments based upon the way I look and sound.)

"Well, I’m sorry you feel that way," I respond, "but you are still in my personal space."

Then comes a stunning retort: "You should know that I’m a judge."

"Are you really," I say. "Well, thanks for telling me that in the fruit aisle at Waitrose, but I’m sorry your judgeness, you are still in my personal space."

But the 'judge' ... if indeed she was one ... was STILL not giving up.

"I said, I don’t talk to people like you,' she says, remaining too close for comfort.

I didn’t budge, not out of stubbornness you understand, but simply because I still hadn’t decided which grapes I wanted. No-one, not even a judge, was going to stand in the way of me choosing between white, red or a rather nice Vitoria Seedless variety I had been mulling over!

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Finally, the judge moved away.

But she wasn't done with me yet.

"I'm a judge," she reminded me again from a distance, "and I see people like you in court."

Judged.

By a judge.

In Waitrose!

What is it with some people?

I hope the woman has had a serious think about her behaviour in the days since.

It's especially concerning in this case, should they be allowing their personal prejudices to seep into their decision-making during their day job!

Meanwhile I've moved on and have forgiven her, but some people just don't make it easy, do they?

And why is it important to forgive?

Well, when something like this happens out of the blue it's disconcerting at first and then it can make you angry and possibly even resentful that you could be 'judged' just for the way you look or sound.

The Bible teaches us that unselfish love is the basis for true forgiveness, since 'it keeps no record of wrongs' (1 Corinthians 13:5).

And forgiving others means you can let go of any residual feelings of resentment you may also be experiencing.

Now I hope, dear reader, you are never judged by a judge - especially while choosing grapes - but next time someone says something hurtful to you or makes you feel annoyed or even angry, try letting go of it, just by saying 'I forgive them'.

It's actually quite liberating.

I can even look back on it and laugh now!

Ronnie Semley, Diocesan Communications Manager