

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity—June 28, 2026

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus addresses our hearts in the words of Gospel reading today. He instructs us as Christians that our hearts are to be ones of mercy, and our judgments are to be from a humble heart. He doesn't tell us to ignore sin; we are to repent of our own and in a spirit of mercy and humility address the sin of our neighbors.

The first part, though, sets the outlook as Jesus said, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

From the beginning of this Gospel reading Jesus makes something clear. Judgement happens. The word mercy implies judgment has been passed and one has mercy upon another. Jesus explains this all using the relationship to the Father. The reality is the Father judges you; God judges you and his judgment isn't hidden; it's revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The law of God reveals God's judgment and delivers the same. God lays before you his will and what is truly good and his eternal will and you see what is commanded of you. You are exposed before him, and God shows that you have sinned against him. That's a judgment. He then teaches you in many places that the punishment that is due this transgression is death. God judges you.

This concept of judgment though isn't foreign. God has ordered his creation, which includes you, which occupies offices that render judgment. The foundational office by which God has established this work and from which all other authorities stem from is the parental office. The fourth commandment informs all earthly authorities and their offices. Earthly fathers judge and God has given this work with this office. Think about it for a second, if fathers don't judge, they are terrible fathers. Fathers judge their children. God commands them to bring their children up in the way they should go in the fear and instruction of the Lord. A father teaches his children the things of God. He teaches them the rules of the house. He judges when the rules have been violated and disciplines his children. He also protects his family as he leads and governs. He makes judgments in all these things. The same goes for the government and other authorities.

There are times when you must judge one another according to your vocation and failing to do so would be sinning against God. A judge who refuses to judge a person in a court case, for example, sins as he has been placed into that office as an instrument of God for the protection of good and punishment of evil. But even in these cases mercy and humility are to be what flows as you see the redemption of Christ. Judges judge so that order is upheld and law is maintained. Innocent people are protected when criminals are judged. The boss who must fire the terrible worker does so in this mercy because people will suffer in some way if that worker continues the job. The discipline of a father or authority is the same thing as he does so not in revenge but for the sake of his neighbor. These things are good and for the good of others. All these things are well and good and what God teaches throughout the whole of the Scriptures.

The question and application in the reading today gets to the heart of the Christian and what Jesus teaches about it for our individual lives as live with one another. What God calls us to do as Christians is to show mercy. It's to forgive those who sin against us and love our neighbors as ourselves. This is what the Lord has shown toward us when we see what his judgment is toward our sin yet in sending his Son to pay what we owe and suffer what we deserve. The mercy of God is shown toward you and known in Christ crucified for you.

Really this reading from Luke, then, is about forgiveness. This is mercy which you show to others. Rather than condemn them you forgive them. Jesus said, "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

So often God speaks about the abundance and overflowing nature of his mercy. Why is that? It's because God mercy is for you and it overflows and your life toward others. There's more than enough to show mercy to one another and God's mercy never runs out. His steadfast love and mercy endure forever. This is related to the Old Testament reading

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where Joseph forgives his brothers who are fearful he will seek revenge against them. He said, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.” Joseph forgave his brothers and didn’t seek vengeance.

That’s what God teaches you. But that’s so counter intuitive isn’t it? It’s so contrary to what you are taught in the world around you when you look around and see how people treat one another. But you know what you don’t see in the world around you and what doesn’t come naturally as a fallen creature? Forgiveness. You need forgiveness to be shown to you. You need to be forgiven and not treated as you deserve to be treated. You need to be shown compassion. Who has done that to you and for you? Christ has and still does. His mercy overflows and your sin is forgiven. Thanks be to God this is what your Lord has done for you and how he regards you as he counts Christ and his righteousness to you in the waters of your baptism.

God is the source of your forgiveness, then, to your neighbor. You don’t merit his forgiveness rather he forgives you and you forgive one another. “We love because he first loved us” God teaches you in 1 John 4. Jesus is your teacher, and you aren’t above him. He teaches you to be merciful so be merciful.

Jesus also teaches you how to approach your neighbor as one who is forgiven and is to be merciful as your Father is merciful. St. Luke recorded this in the Gospel reading. Jesus also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.”

God instructs you as you go through this life as he calls you into various vocations in your family, the church, and society. You are called to examine who you are what duties go with your office and station. See what God teaches about being a father, mother, husband, wife, or worker. See where God has placed you are you live in this world with your neighbor and in relationship to him. You speak in the office God has placed you into and you speak the truth. Sometimes this means you must speak ill of your neighbor, but you do so as God has appointed and according to what he has reveal is good and right. You sin when you speak out of your place, that is when you place yourself into seat of judgment when it has not been given to you do so. God commands you to uphold and protect the reputation of your neighbor. You go out of your way and even suffer if it means that your neighbor’s reputation is maintained. You are not to speak ill of your neighbor.

If you must speak, you speak to him as God has appointed and according to God’s law and commands not just what you may think is right or wrong. Manmade commandments and laws are not the righteousness of God. The Formula of Concord speaks a great deal about this in the article on the Third Use of the Law, Article VI. God’s law is for people even after they have been converted to the Christian faith because sinful man tries to come up with his own standards and ideas of what are good works, what is right or righteous, and what man is free or not free to do. To claim something is wrong where God has not made that statement is to judge and make a judgment that belongs only to God. Likewise, the Large Catechism rightly confesses from the Bible that to exercise an office of judgment when that office has not been given to you to do so also judges where God has commanded you not to judge. That is an issue of breaking the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment, “you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” The Hymn of the Day we sang a few minutes ago summarizes this all well.

So, what’s the answer? You are to listen and follow God’s word and his judgments and commands. You are to look at and examine yourself and remove the log from your own eye as you seek to live a godly life in this world. How is this done? Confess your sin and receive God’s absolution, his forgiveness. That’s the center of your life in Christ and the highest worship of God, to receive his forgiveness. Hearing God’s word, confessing your sin, and eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ is your life in Christ where you sin is forgiven and where there is the forgiveness of sins

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there is life and salvation. This is how you find your confidence to stand before God's judgement as one who is baptized into Christ and one who rightly seeks to be merciful even as your Father is merciful.

You speak to your neighbor, one on one, when he has sinned against you and then you take another with you if that first attempt is fruitless. Finally, if there is no change, then you take it to the church and the office appointed to deal with this sin in a public way. Sometimes this means being separated from body of Christ, as is the case of the church. All the while, the purpose is winning back your brother, and he turn from his sin and he live.

It truly is sad that this Gospel is abused the way it is today, but it shouldn't surprise us one bit. What God does and what God says is good, but we are sinners and sinners take the good and misuse it. Forgiveness does not approve of sin. Approving of sin and looking the other way is to hate your neighbor and not care whether he goes to hell. Sin always harms and always destroys. Sin must absolutely be addressed. It's what Jesus did and still does through his word that you confess in your life and the vocations you have in this world.

It's a godly thing, then, to approach, in humility, a brother or sister in Christ who is sinning. That too is not an optional thing but something God teaches you to do. The reading today is not an excuse for your to not speak where you have been given to speak. It's not your "out" to avoid controversy and not be a Christian parent, friend, and neighbor. Yet, in your rebuking of sin as a Christian, which you must do when it is your place to do so, the Lord also warns you as he does in this Gospel reading. You must consider the log in your own eye before you can see clearly to take out the speck in your brother's eye.

In our lives lived in this world, our appeal in all of this is because justice has been done against sin. Christ is our mercy seat. His death took upon our sin and is where we see that God is just and doesn't overlook sin. God is no liar and we owe a debt to God because of our sin. Yet, Christ is our mediator whose blood appeals to the Father on our behalf and thereby we have peace with God through him who is our righteousness.

And that's the thing in all of this; we are humble before God. Jesus said, "He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

The log or literally here in Greek the "load bearing beam" is sticking out of our eye. Does our brother still have a speck in his? Yes, he does and we don't ignore that fact. But the spirit by which we approach our brother is first knowing who we are before God in our sin and we then approach our brother in the same humility and for the sake of showing him mercy. That's vastly different than seeking vengeance or holding our brother's sin against him however heinous it may be. It's also not ours to figure this out how to deal with one another rather we listen to our teacher, Jesus, and what he says. The blind only leads the blind into the pit. Being in the word of God means hearing it and studying it. We see how God, by the Holy Spirit, opens our eyes to see God and his mercy and the mercy we show to one another. Otherwise we are left as sinners dealing with other sinners so be prepared to fall into the pit here in this world and the pit of Sheol for eternity. Listen to Jesus, listen to God's word and keep it.

There are times in our lives when this will be hard, and we may think we are unable to forgive our neighbor. When someone has sinned against us the wounds run deep. But woe upon us when we are unwilling to forgive our neighbor's sin. This is where these words of Jesus today hit us between the eyes and teach us what it means to be one who belongs to Christ. We pray as our Lord has taught us, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." If we have something we are holding against another person and refusing to forgive him or her, each time we pray the Lord's Prayer we are mocking God and lying to him. If that's what we are doing, then repent otherwise don't expect God to show us mercy.

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In those times when you struggle with the temptation to not show mercy to someone, appeal to Jesus who has died for all. Fix your eyes on the Lord and desire the godly and merciful heart. The person who sinned against you, however that may be, is a person Jesus died for on the cross. See Christ's death for what it truly is, the sacrifice for the sin of the world. The person or people who sin against you, Jesus died for and Jesus instructs you in the reading today to be merciful and do not condemn them. That never once means you condone or tolerate what the person has done or that you don't call them to repentance. You have a Christian duty to do this according to your office as parent, spouse, friend, or neighbor. God teaches you that as a baptized child of God you show your neighbor mercy even as you have been shown mercy in Christ. His mercy overflows toward you in Christ crucified.

What a joy to have such a God who has shown mercy and pardons your iniquity for the sake of Christ. Repent of your own sin this day and place it on the one who has died in your place. So too forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against you. Hear and take to heart these words today and receive God's mercy poured out even as you have Christ and his benefits in your baptism and as you take into your mouths his very body and blood which was shed for you on the cross and is raised for your justification. Your God is merciful toward you and judges you on account of the Son and his perfect life of obedience to the Father and his death atoning for your sin. Your advocate is Jesus and continues to be so at the right hand of the Father interceding for you. Go through this world in this overflowing mercy until that day when you are taken to him and raised from your grave and live before him in eternal joy and peace with all of God's saints forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.