

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity: July 5, 2020
“Blessed Judgy McJudgerson”

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Our text is our Gospel Lesson, Luke 6, where we hear one of the most wrongly understood, erroneously applied and grossly misquoted texts in all of God’s Holy Word. These words are massacred and twisted beyond their true meaning time and time again. Sadly, they are used as an evil banner of self-justification to do whatever you want.

Part of the problem is the context; rather, the lack of it. These words are part of a much larger context; a lengthy discourse known as “the Sermon on the Plain.” It is very similar to the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew, but, it is not the same sermon. It’s not the same exact words, and it wasn’t spoken at the same time, although it was spoken to many of the same people. This is not a churchly conspiracy or an error in recording. I know it may sound hard to believe, but Jesus actually taught the same thing to people more than once. If you’ve ever been around kids, you’ll understand. Sometimes, saying something once, is just not enough.

As these words are part of a larger sermon, the context is important. It is dangerous to pick things out and use them, without understanding the context—modern use of headlines and social media give more than enough examples. It is difficult to ponder while we celebrate a day of national independence, many don’t really know what freedom is.

Hear the text again, “*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.*”¹

These words of Jesus are often misused to say that humans are never to judge. What are the first words of this text? Mercy. It is not our mercy that is central, it is the Father’s mercy that dictates. So, what is mercy? According to the dictionary, mercy is the “*compassionate or kindly forbearance shown toward an offender, an enemy, or other*

¹ Luke 6:36-38

person in one's power; the discretionary power of a judge to pardon someone or to mitigate punishment, especially to send to prison rather than invoke the death penalty.”

To be merciful requires an offense to have taken place. It requires a right and wrong with a judge who has the authority to make judgment and pronounce sentence. Most often, when someone today says, “You can’t judge me. Judge not lest you be judged.” Not only are they themselves sitting in the judgment seat and have made a judgment about you, they also have dismissed the Father’s mercy.

Let me explain. There is a difference between judging and being judgmental. A judge is one who has full command, knowledge and authority of the law. Luther writes in his Large Catechism, “*A judge ought, above all, to be a man of integrity, and not only upright but also a wise, sagacious, brave, and fearless man. Likewise, a witness should be fearless; more than that, he should be an upright man. He who is to administer justice equitably in all cases will often offend good friends, relatives, neighbors, and the rich and powerful who are in a position to help or harm him. He must therefore be quite blind, shutting his eyes and ears to everything but the evidence presented, and make his decision accordingly.*”² To be a judge is to proclaim the truth, even in the face of persecution.

A judge in our court system is to be impartial and judge with fairness, equity, and honor. In our current system, they are to judge laws, not legislate them. There is not one person who is above the law, even though many will try. The same is true for God’s Law. There is not one person who is above the Law of God. The only one who is to judge is the one who is fair, impartial, and has full knowledge, command and authority of the law. That belongs to God Himself and He has given this gift to men through His Word. To judge according to God’s Word gives answer to a higher authority than man; it serves the purpose of showing and proclaiming the truth for all times and in all places.

To be judgmental on the other hand, is a trait that is self-serving. The focus is based on one person’s particular slanted view of the law that aims to please only the one with that view. To be judgmental is a sinful action that applies my own laws, to everybody else. There is no thought of fairness or equity. To be judgmental places the final authority on myself, and not on God. To be judgmental is a selfish view that tries to exert my needs or wants, my selfish desires, over another person.

²Luther’s Large Catechism, the 8th Commandment

The Christian is to judge without being judgmental. That means there is only one source for what is true, and honorable and fair: God's Word. The source of life for the Christian is God's Holy Word. His Word is the judging standard. It is only with God's Word that a Christian can and must declare something as a sin or not; not because the Christian is making and deciding what is morally right and wrong; it is God's Word that we judge with because it is God's Word that first judges us. As the Christian judges, we are ever to remember that we are absolutely forbidden to speak evil of our neighbor.

Luther reminds us of the great power of the tongue and the gift that is given to us. He says, *"Exception is made, however, of civil magistrates, preachers, and parents, for we must interpret [the 8th Commandment] in such a way that evil shall not go unpunished. We have seen that the Fifth Commandment forbids us to injure anyone physically, and yet an exception is made of the hangman. By virtue of his office he does not do his neighbor good but only harm and evil, yet he does not sin against God's commandment because God of his own accord instituted that office, and as he warns in the Fifth Commandment, he has reserved to himself the right of punishment. Likewise, although no one has in his own person the right to judge and condemn anyone, yet if they whose duty it is fail to do so, they sin as much as those who take the law into their own hands without such a commission. Necessity requires one to report evil, to prefer charges, to attest, examine, and witness. It is no different from the situation of the physician who, to cure a patient, is sometimes compelled to examine and handle his private parts. Just so, magistrates, parents, even brothers and sisters and other good friends are under mutual obligation to reprove evil where it is necessary and beneficial. But the right way to deal with this matter would be to observe the order laid down by the Gospel, Matthew 18."*³

The summary and substance of the 8th Commandment is this, *"No one shall harm his neighbor, whether friend or foe, with his tongue. No one shall speak evil of him, whether truly or falsely, unless it is done with proper authority or for his improvement."*⁴ The tongue is a powerful thing. James reminds us, ***"Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!"***⁵

³Luther's Large Catechism, the 8th Commandment

⁴Luther's Large Catechism, the 8th Commandment

⁵ James 3:4-5

You can name any sin and in it you will find one version or another of self-serving. You know the Ten Commandments and how to examine yourself. Let's take a quick glance. The first speaks of idols humans set up over God either in the mind, the heart, or fashioned with hands; the second is the willful wrongful use of God's Holy Name; third is the profanation, the irreverence, the utter disrespect of God's Holy day, to put your wants of a day over the wants of God's Day; the fourth forbids disobedience to those in any authority; the fifth forbids violence and any willful harm to the body, yours and your neighbors; the sixth is adultery, fornication, and the dishonoring of the holy institution of marriage by using your body in ways that are reserved for the marriage bed in any way outside of that bond; the seventh is focused on man's love of possessions by thieving to get what does not belong to you; the eighth relates to lying and placing your reputation over everyone else's; the ninth and tenth address covetousness, which is a sinful desire of things that are not yours.

All of these commandments, and their related sins, have to do with the exaltation of the desires, passions, and perversity of the self over the honor of God and the welfare of our neighbor. We want golf, or swimming, or fishing, or hunting, or just a few more hours in bed more than God. We want sexual gratification, regardless of the damage it may do to ourselves or the other party and the families involved, more than God. We want money, property, honor; even though getting these things may mean hurting or devaluing others more than we want to honor God. We want what God does not and we inherited that presumption from our first parents and have been taught continually by the world and our own parents, which we in turn continue to teach our children and our grandchildren by our own words and actions.

We serve ourselves. We would rather serve the god of the "I" and not the God of the "I AM." The ego is always there. It is a humiliating thought that even our most generous actions are in some degree spoiled by vanity, by sin, by a gratification of self that we find by being generous. We do good so that we can feel good about doing good; rather, than doing good simply because that is what is required of us. The judging from this list does not come from man, it comes from God!

The difference between our way and God's way is the difference between getting and giving. We want to acquire; God wants to bestow. Exactly what we want is different for each individual, but the basic desire is the same. We want and we are willing to go to great lengths and to hurt ourselves or others to get it, all the while convincing ourselves

that it is just a bit of sacrifice. So what is my honor compared to a few dollars? What is my presence in God's Word compared to the weekend to fish and relax? What is my reading of God's Word compared to the flashy, back-and-forth dialogue of this great and wonderful show that may last a few seasons?

We are willing to sacrifice, as long as it is not too inconvenient. Brothers and sisters, what is the mercy of God? What is the length, the breadth, the depth of the sacrifice of God? Just how far, how much, would God sacrifice for mercy? Behold the cross! He gave His own Son. Jesus was judged. The Word of God was judged by God and your sin was placed upon Him. He gave all that He had, so you would be free. Not just free from a tyrannical and oppressive government or taxation without representation; He freed you from sin, from death, and from the power of devil for all eternity. In this gracious and merciful act, He was judged with your sin. In the waters of baptism, you are judged with His life.

The blessing of God rests upon a life of love, His love. Because He is judged for us, we are free to live as God's beloved children, one's whom have been created, redeemed, and sanctified in the image of God.

Jesus said, ***“My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.”***⁶ What does this look like? Instead of expecting people to be nice and kind to you and then feeling hurt when they are not, the Christian is kind to them always. Instead of coming to church with the attitude of daring the Church to put something into you and the pastor to make you feel what you want to feel and only say those things that you already know with no surprises and sing only the things that please you, the Christian is immersed in the service. The Christian rejoices to be in the liturgy, the hymns, the Word, and the Sacraments. Instead of expecting to be treated like royalty when coming to a meeting, the Christian is grateful for the privilege of Christian knowledge and service. Instead of expecting that you know it all, the Christian seeks first the righteousness of God, and occupies themselves in the hearing, reading, and study of God's Word. Instead of serving the self, the Christian serves the neighbor. The Christian is generous with

⁶ John 7:16-18

money, time, and talents; simply giving in love, because they have been given first in love.

God has given and we have special proof of His giving. In the Holy Sacrament of the Altar the gift of Christ's body and blood are bestowed graciously to His Church. He has given His body into death for your sins. Holy Communion is our Lord and Savior's application of the forgiveness of sins to the baptized. The priceless gift of salvation gives His love to you here, for your life and your benefit. He tells us to eat and drink in remembrance of Him. This is not just a sentimental recalling of a noble figure that once lived and is now gone. If we think about Him at all, we recall His sacrificial death and we cling to it as we receive its benefit in the same body and blood shed now here for us to eat and drink.

Here is the mercy of God given for you. Here is the ***Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over***, into your mouth. This the Christian receives with thanksgiving. It is truly, good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to God. Having this vivid sacramental meal and here by eating and drinking we recall His great sacrifice, the memory of it ought to be a real generator through the rest of the week.

This heavenly food is given to us for that purpose—which is the reason we ought to commune often—because the memory of His broken body and His shed blood is so easily forgotten when we leave these doors. We need to be refreshed so that we know of His never failing steadfast love for us. We eat and drink to keep God's selflessness ever before us as our example and our guide. He prepares a table before us in the midst of our enemies and here our cup overflows with His grace and love. Here the good measure is given to us. Not just until we feel we have had enough, but as Jesus says, "***pressed down, shaken together, and running over.***"⁷ Here the same tongue used for evil is given new life; forgiveness in bread and wine as Jesus body is placed on that same tongue and His blood cleanses that tongue. Here the judge has judged and by faith you stand in His mercy. The measure of love poured out on the cross, here comes to you in a very real tangible way. The judgement of Christ for you keeps you covered in His blood and so from your baptism until your final day, you wonderfully sing,

⁷ Luke 6:38

“O God, my faithful God,
True fountain ever flowing,
Without whom nothing is,
All perfect gifts bestowing:
Give me a healthy frame,
And may I have within
A conscience free from blame,
A soul unstained by sin.

And on that final day
When all the dead are waking,
Stretch out Your mighty hand,
My deathly slumber breaking.
Then let me hear Your voice,
Redeem this earthly frame,
And bid me to rejoice
With those who love Your name.”⁸ Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

⁸ 696 O God, My Faithful God LSB 696:1,6

Prayer of the Church
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Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

For an increase of mercy among all the baptized, that they would bless and not curse, forgive as they have been forgiven, give as they have been given to, and speak the truth in love, not with anger and pride, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all pastors in Christ, that they would remain bold to preach the Gospel in its purity and administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For favorable weather and a bountiful harvest, that our crops would receive God's nurture and blessing, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For industries and the service sectors of this land, that their labors may be just and the work they do may be profitable for all people, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For a culture of life in our land and throughout the world, that all life from the womb to the grave would be cherished, and that all who view life as expendable would have their hearts and minds changed, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who have been placed in authority over us, that they would govern with a mind focused on peace and the general welfare of all, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For an end to the pandemic and for mercy on all who suffer physical, spiritual and economic hardship because of it, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the freedoms we enjoy in our country, let us give thanks to the Lord; that we would never take these freedoms for granted and always strive to defend and protect them, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the sick, for those preparing to undergo surgery, for the elderly and shut-in, for those suffering in any way and for all who desire our prayers, [*especially Marvin, Ken, Carmen, Susan, Zoey and those we name in our hearts,*] that, according to God's good and gracious will, they may receive healing, comfort and assurance of His care for them, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those whom God has granted another year of earthly life especially His servants, *Dustin, William, Nolan, Macey, Pastor Travis, and Kathy*; that God would send His holy angels to guard and keep His children; that they may thank and praise him for the gift of life and for the protection and care He has provided; that God would grant them to grow in grace, continue to know His loving-kindness, abide in the confession of His care and protection, serve Him faithfully all the days of their life and finally come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; let us pray to the Lord; **Lord have mercy.**

For the joy and blessings that God has granted *Tim & Sherry and Harold & Susan* during the years of their marriage; that God would assist them always by His grace that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may ever honor and keep their marriage vows, grow in love towards Him and for each other, and come at last to the eternal joys that He have promised; let us pray to the Lord; **Lord have mercy.**

For those who receive the Holy Eucharist this day, that they would eat and drink the very body and blood of Christ with faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**