

**In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen**

**Fourth Sunday after Trinity (2022)**

**With What Do You Measure?**

**Rev. Toby Byrd**

***“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.” (Luke 6:37–38, ESV)***

The text of the Gospel for today is taken from our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount. In His address to the multitude there is a section known as the *Imperatives of Catechesis*, which is partly included in today’s Gospel Reading. The *Imperatives of Catechesis* contain eight imperatives describing what shape a believer’s life should take as they live out their lives in Christ, and the Gospel for today contains four of those eight imperatives: *do not judge, do not condemn, forgive, and give*. These imperatives show you how Jesus would have you live, how He would have you treat others, your brothers and sisters in Christ and your neighbor. But the flesh is a very strong enemy, and it often gets in the way of your following these four imperatives.

St. Paul reminds us that strife, jealousy, anger, dissension, division and envy are all works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). These works lead you to do what you should not do; to judge others when you’re told not to and to condemn others when you’re told not to. Furthermore, these works also lead you away from doing what you ought, to forgive when you should forgive and to give when someone is in need. Although St. Paul described the works of the flesh, He also knew the difficulty that the flesh would have living according to these imperatives. He wrote, ***“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” (Romans 7:15, ESV)*** Yes, you want to fulfill the imperatives, but you find it most difficult. However, if you walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh, keeping in step with the Spirit, He will lead you away from gratifying the flesh. He will lead you away from judging and condemning while leading you to forgive and give. But walking by the Spirit is not an easy thing for believers because the corrupted flesh which continues to pull them away from the Spirit. This reality merely reminds you this is a continuous fight, the battle of the flesh and the Spirit, goes on within the heart of the believer all their days. This is the battle of Sanctification which flows and ebbs throughout your life, but with the help of the Spirit it will flow more than it will ebb. Therefore, we pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us all our days to overcome the desire of our flesh, aiding us to conform to the imperatives of our Lord Jesus not to judge and not to condemn, but to forgive and to give.

Jesus says we are to ***“judge not,”*** yet we know that in God’s left-hand kingdom He says it is legitimate to bring judicial decisions against lawbreakers. Furthermore, in God’s right-hand kingdom, the Church, God insist that we judge false doctrine and enact church discipline against sin and those who would lead others into sin. So obviously these judgments are not included in the imperative to judge not in the Gospel Reading for today. When our Lord Jesus says we are to, ***“judge not,”*** He is speaking specifically of the sin of criticizing or finding fault with your brother or your neighbor for things that do not fall into the categories I just spoke of. But pastor you say, doesn’t Jesus tell us in Matthew 18, ***“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault.”*** Yes, He does, but this is not for the purpose of judging or criticizing your brother, nor is it for bringing him shame and humiliation. Instead, you are told to go to your offending

brother, ***“between you and him alone,”*** to WIN him over, to show him his sin so he can repent, confess, and be reconciled to you and God. Jesus says, ***“If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”*** (Matthew 18:15, ESV) Walking this way in the Lord gives you confidence that you will measure up to His imperative, remembering His words, ***“For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”***

So, too, Jesus says you are to ***“condemn not.”*** Do you think you have the power or the authority to condemn another? If so, this is foolishness. Condemnation is solely the purview of God.

St. Paul’s comment, ***“we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil,”*** (2 Corinthians 5:10, ESV) reminds us of the corruption of our flesh and its continual need to be exercised by the Law. But some understand this statement to mean that the evil works done by Christians will be brought to light in the Last Judgment and they will be condemned to the fire of hell. But this understanding is contrary to Holy Scripture. Christ refutes such teaching, saying, ***“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*** (John 3:18, ESV) God, Himself reminds us through the psalmist, ***“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”*** (Psalm 103:11–12, ESV) Furthermore, our Lord says, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”*** (John 5:24, ESV) And again He says, ***“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”*** (John 3:17, ESV) St. Paul reiterates the Lord’s words when he says, ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** (Romans 8:1, ESV)

We are reminded that on the Last Day, the Day of the Resurrection of the Dead, the Day of Judgment, that there will be two classes of people, those on the right-hand side of Jesus and those on His left. To those on His right He says, ***“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*** (Matthew 25:34, ESV) Those on His right are the righteous whose good works are given consideration and their evil works are forgotten because they have been justified by the atoning sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the Altar of the Cross, they have been forgiven through Baptism, Holy Communion, and Absolution, they have been robed in the righteousness of Christ, made children of God, and promised eternal life in heaven. Although they are sinners because of their corrupted flesh, they are also saints, chosen by God to be His children, children who because of the gift of faith, are led to repentance and to the confession of their sin, with the assurance that for the sake of Jesus Christ, they are forgiven. They are not condemned.

If God will not condemn those who believe in Christ Jesus for salvation, what makes you think you have the right to condemn them? You don’t! Condemnation is reserved for those on the left-hand side of Christ, to whom He will say, ***“Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”*** (Matthew 25:41, ESV) Condemnation is for the unbeliever, the reprobate, the apostate; identities which do not belong to a believer. Thus, if you condemn another, you are saying they belong in this later category, a category whose recipients are only identified by God when they close their eyes in death or on the Last Day. Those on the left do not measure up and neither do you if you condemn another in this life. To judge or to condemn is a sin of commission. Remember, our Lord says, ***“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned.”***

The last two imperatives: “*forgive*” and “*give*” are not just things you should do as followers of Jesus Christ but things you’re expected to do if you are to be *forgiven* and *given* eternal life in heaven.

To forgive and to give are God’s merciful attributes and they are to be reflected in the hearts of His children. Jesus instructs you, saying, “*Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*” (Luke 6:36, *ESV*) How can you be merciful if you’re not forgiving? How can you be merciful if you’re not giving? You can’t. A child of God loves, blesses, and intercedes for their enemies. They are kind to one another, forgiving, tender-hearted. As God, for the sake of His beloved Son has forgiven you, you are to forgive others.

The focus of Holy Scripture reveals the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Scripture reveals the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin, death, and the devil. His redemptive work turned God’s graciousness towards you, a sinner: which led to your forgiveness, your reconciliation with God. St. Paul sums this up, saying, “*All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*” (2 Corinthians 5:18–19, *ESV*) Do not think you’re worthy of God’s forgiveness if you are unwilling to forgive others. You’re not. Jesus explains this thoroughly when He says, “*If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*” (Matthew 6:14–15, *ESV*)

In the fifth petition of the Lord’s prayer, you pray, “*forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,*” but if you are unwilling to forgive, you lie every time you pray that prayer. Jesus says to us, “*Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*” (Mark 11:25, *ESV*) Scripture tells us there are no degrees of justification. Unlike sanctification, justification is not a process. Justification consists in the forgiveness of sins which Christ won for us on the Altar of the Cross. It was a one-time, instantaneous event. Therefore, we have peace with God not by our merit or works but by the merit and works of Christ Jesus. Moreover, we become the beneficiary of Christ’s work when the Holy Spirit brings us to faith, the justification that Christ won is then applied to us. If God is willing to forgive you, a poor, miserable sinner for the sake of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who are you to think that you can be unforgiving? Assuredly, with such an attitude, you’re not measuring up.

Regarding the imperative to give, Jesus reminds you not to practice, “*Your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*” (Matthew 6:1–4, *ESV*) Simply put, don’t do charity hoping your charitable work will be recognized by God or others so that you will be honored or rewarded. Such charity is nothing more than an evil work, a work done from a selfish purpose, a work not recognized by God as good. True giving reflects the light of Christ upon the recipient. True giving is a good work that gives glory to God. Thus, giving is a good work recognized by God and the recipient. Giving in the manner described by Jesus is measuring up.

In our text Jesus says, “*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.*” (Luke 6:37–38, *ESV*) Thus, I ask,

*With What do You Measure*, with the gift of faith, with the renewed and regenerate heart, or do you measure with your corrupted flesh?

Jesus warns, ***“The measure you use”*** in judging others, in condemning others, in not forgiving others, and in not giving to the needy, ***“will be measured back to you.”*** Then, He asks, ***“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.” (Luke 6:41–42, ESV)*** If you’re guided by the Holy Spirit, who guides you by these four imperatives, you will not have time to see specks or logs, instead your eyesight will be clear, and you will only see a brother or sister who is a child of God or one who has the potential to become a child of God.

So do not judge, do not condemn, instead forgive, and give to others the blessing that have been given to you in Christ Jesus. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.