

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Luke 6:36-42  
July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Greenville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

### Your Father Is Also Merciful

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

#### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Gospel pericope for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity Sunday is one of the most misquoted texts in the New Testament. The words, "Judge not, lest ye be judged" get quoted back to Christians often. These words are often spoken against Christians to justify whatever wicked behavior in which they are attempting to remain. However, many people on both sides of the argument fail to understand what this text is really about. We forget that before our Lord + Jesus Christ says, "Judge not," He states, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." This text and its parables are all about showing mercy.

What is mercy? Mercy is not treating someone the way they deserve to be treated on account of their sins against you. Well, how does that play out in our life? How do we show mercy to another person? We show mercy by being loving, sympathetic, and to show a compassionate heart toward our neighbor. It means that we make their troubles and worries and doubts our own troubles, worries and doubts. It means we are constantly ready to help our neighbor in whatever needs he has, whether that be doing something for him, or providing him counsel. It means to help or console our neighbor by our works or words. And, if we can help our neighbor in no other way, then having mercy means we pray for our neighbor and have heartfelt sympathy for him and his needs.

As you can see, mercy involves our heart. This is why our Lord God says in His holy Word that He desires mercy more than sacrifice, for sacrifice is an external act. A good work that is done in the sight of everyone is an external act. Even an unbeliever can perform such a good work, and the world will praise him for it. But, an act of mercy is an internal act. No one, but the Lord God, can see what is in another person's heart. And so, an act of mercy can only be seen by our Lord God. It cannot be done simply to gain favor from the world. It is an act done in the secret place of the heart. Only God and the person doing the act can feel the compassion being used to help his neighbor. This is why our Lord + Jesus begins this conversation by talking about mercy. For, a merciful heart seeks not its own good, but the good of other people.

Our Lord + Jesus even gives an example of mercy. Let your mercy be like the mercy of your heavenly Father. How is your heavenly Father merciful toward you and all mankind? Let us count the ways. Many evil acts are done under the cover of night and behind closed doors, where and when a person thinks no one is able to see them. This is when we sin the most: when we think nobody is watching us. But, our heavenly Father see all things. He sees what we do in the dark; what we do behind closed doors; and what we do when no man is watching. By every right, our heavenly Father

can condemn us and all mankind on account of our sins. If we desire to do evil things in the dark, He could easily withhold the sun from us, and from all mankind, so that the depravity that is within us might lead us to our eternal doom. But, our heavenly Father doesn't withhold the sun from us. Even though wicked and sinful things are being done in the dark, he causes the sun to shine on both the believer and the unbeliever.

He causes the rain to fall on the just and unjust. Food is provided for the sinner and the saint. Our heavenly Father shows mercy to all mankind, by giving them sun, rain, food, water, wine and beer. Even to all evil people. This is the mercy that our heavenly Father has toward His creation. It is the mercy that our Lord + Jesus admonishes us to have. Therefore, when our Lord + Jesus says, "Judge not" He is encouraging us to be merciful.

Well, does this mean that we should not correct, or admonish our neighbor's sinful behavior? Is this what it means to judge someone? No, of course not. To judge means to place ourselves above other people. It means to accuse and condemn someone for the same sinful acts that you are performing. To judge and condemn is not an act of mercy. It is an act of treating someone the way they deserve to be treated on account of their sin. The same way that we deserve to be treated on account of our sin. However, pointing out someone's sin—attempting to draw someone away from their destructive, sinful behavior—is an act of mercy. For, it seeks our neighbor's good.

What our Lord + Jesus is really doing in this text is calling us to humility. He is calling us to have a repentant heart. When we are pointing out someone's sin, we should ever have in our mind our own sin. This the meaning of the speck and the plank. Acknowledge that in the sight of the Lord your God you have a plank in your eye—that is, your sins against the Lord God are greater than the sins—the speck—of your neighbor against you.

When we understand our own sinfulness and the destruction it causes us—that is, it blinds us with a huge plank in our eyes—we need to repent, that is, have contrition over our sins, and cling to our Lord + Jesus in faith. When we cling to the works of Christ in faith, the plank of our sins is removed. For, what does our Lord + Jesus say? "Everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." The only person who was ever perfectly trained in the Law of God, was our Lord + Jesus. He is just like His teacher—our heavenly Father. Our Lord + Jesus has perfect mercy and compassion. He does not treat us like we deserve to be treated, but He instead offers up His life in the place of our life. He gives of Himself, with no expectation of receiving a reward from us. In fact, the world scoffs at our Lord's great act of redemption for us.

Our heavenly Father and our Lord + Jesus Christ show us what it is to have mercy—to give of one's self without expectation of reward. This is how we should act according to the second table of the Ten Commandments. All of those commandments—four through ten—are about loving and serving our neighbor. We show love for our neighbor by not hating or killing him. We show love to him by not diddling with his spouse. We show love to our neighbor by not taking his stuff, or destroying his reputation. We show love to our neighbor by not jealously coveting anything that belongs to our neighbor, and obtaining it by means which the world would say is "okay," but in reality, there is evil in your heart. We show love to our neighbor when we help him keep all these things. But, we also show love for our neighbor when we keep him from harming their neighbors.

This is why pointing out someone's sin, is not judging. Although a fine point must be made, if your pointing out of sin is because you believe you are better than that other person, then you are being judgmental. But, if your pointing out another person's sins is out of love and concern, you are being merciful. Furthermore, if someone points out our sins, our reaction should be one of repentance. We should hear that person and acknowledge our sinfulness, not try to determine whether the person's heart is being compassionate or judgmental. For, we will never be able to determine that, only the Lord

God can see that person's heart. But, when someone points out our sin, we should acknowledge our sin, and repent and turn to our Lord + Jesus and cling to His perfection.

As I said before, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, is the only One Who is perfectly trained by His teacher, the heavenly Father. He is the only One Who fulfilled the Law perfectly. We daily and often fall short of keeping the commandments, both the first and second table of the Law. So then, our Lord + Jesus with these words from this pericope would all have us to be repentant; to cling to Him and His works for our righteousness. When we are repentant—when we sorrow over our sins, and cling to our Lord + Jesus in faith—then we learn to be merciful, for we see how damaging a plank can be in one's eye. With the plank in our eye removed, we can more easily see the formation of a plank in someone else's eye; the speck that is beginning to form and will grow into a plank as the specks multiply.

It is out of mercy—out of love and compassion for our neighbor—that we point out the speck in their eye, for we know the destruction that sin can cause in one's life. We have seen it cause destruction in our own life, and we desire desperately that our neighbor would not fall into that same ditch of destruction. Those who encourage him in his sinful ways, are blind guides and will lead him into the ditch of destruction, but on account of the work of the Holy Ghost, Who has removed the plank from our eyes through the means of grace, we can see clearly to lead the blind sinner on the path to where he will encounter our Lord + Jesus and His works of redemption for him, and he will have his sight restored, just as we have received the sight of faith, in order that we may cling to our Lord + Jesus and His works. On account of His works, our heavenly Father forgives us our sin. The Holy Ghost clothes us with the righteousness of our Lord + Jesus through the means of grace. And, He gives to us all the great gifts Heaven abundantly out of His great mercy. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.