

THE ESSENCE OF THE FAITH: GOD'S MERCY

I. People "Justify" Themselves

II. Christ Justified Sinners

III. One Sinner to Another

IV. Judgment God Doesn't Condemn

Luke 6:36-42

SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2020 | PENTECOST

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Old Testament Isaiah 58:6–12

Psalm Psalm 133–134

New Testament Romans 8:18–23

Gospel Luke 6:36–42

COMMUNION

GRANTS PASS

The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 12 Come Thou Almighty King

Chief Hymn – ELH 420 Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Distribution Hymn – ELH 309 A Wondrous Mystery Is Here

Closing Hymn – ELH 586 How Blest Are They Who Hear God's Word

MEDFORD

Psalm 133-134, p. 115

Opening Hymn - CW 193 Come, Now, Almighty King

Hymn of the Day – CW 494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds

Distribution Hymn - CW 312 Lord Jesus Christ, You Have Prepared

Closing Hymn - CW 325 How Blest Are They Who Hear

Faith & Our Savior Lutheran Churches

Medford & Grants Pass, Oregon

Edward L. Bryant, Pastor

Luke 6:36–42 (CSB)

³⁶ **Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.**

³⁷ **“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you; a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over—will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”**

³⁹ **He also told them a parable: “Can the blind guide the blind? Won’t they both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.**

⁴¹ **“Why do you look at the splinter in your brother’s eye, but don’t notice the beam of wood in your own eye? ⁴² Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye,’ when you yourself don’t see the beam of wood in your eye? Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the splinter in your brother’s eye.**

Dear fellow redeemed: If you watch the news, do you think there is anybody you could find fault with? With the people tearing down monuments? With those who set them up in the first place? With those setting up independent states? With those who are looting and burning? With a Supreme Court who says the “right” of a woman to kill her child shouldn’t be even “burdened.” With the firing of people because they don’t put a blurb out on social media showing solidarity with black lives matter?

I’m not going to ask for a show of hands on any of that; and what’s more, because what all those examples have in common is a lack of mercy, I won’t tempt you to be merciless either. Remember this: The essence of the Christian faith is the mercy of God.

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I. People “Justify” Themselves

The natural state of things is for people to justify themselves while condemning others. I remember the six-year-old Karen in Sunday School who, after the opening prayer announced, “Mark had his eyes open during the prayer!” “And how did you know that, Karen?” asked the teacher. We smile at those kids, but we carry those same judgmental traits into adulthood, often without mercy.

Judgment without forgiveness is the order of the day today. This is beyond any kind of political statement, this is as much a matter of faith and doctrine as a society turning away from Christ to Islam, paganism, or humanism.

It is widely taught and accepted today that Christianity is an irredeemable evil, because its message is to uphold the patriarchal family, convict as sin the now-protected practices of killing the unborn, homosexuality, lesbianism, denial of God’s order in creating men and women, of pornography, sex outside marriage, and the breaking of marriage. And Christian churches would prohibit them if they could.

II. Christ Justified Sinners

Now before you say, “You betcha!” listen to Jesus. The message of Christian faith is God’s mercy. ³⁶ **Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.**

³⁷ **“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**

Are there Christians who have had abortions? Who have viewed pornography? Who have entered their bed before their marriage? Who have same-sex attractions, distorted view of themselves, or broken their marriage vows?

Did Jesus try to stop them? Or did He eat with them and proclaim forgiveness to them? Didn’t he make one murderer an apostle? And what did that murderer write?— ***“This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them.”*** (1 Timothy 1:15, CSB)

So the judgment of this world isn’t our responsibility; it is the Lord’s, and He doesn’t want to bring down damnation on people, but as Peter writes, ***“The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.”*** (2 Peter 3:9, CSB)

III. One Sinner to Another

If we are to be in a rush to identify sin, then it should be to find it in ourselves. ***““Why do you look at the splinter in your brother’s eye, but don’t notice the beam of wood in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye,’ when you yourself don’t see the beam of wood in your eye? Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the splinter in your brother’s eye.”*** (Luke 6:41–42, CSB)

We find it so easy to be critical of others, don’t we? You find fault and get in a high dudgeon over people doing what they have no permission to do, or not doing what (we say) they are supposed to do. Do you not hear how holier-than-thou that is? Do you not see how the cloud of disapproval you project over others is so devoid of mercy?

One of the definitive studies of the issues that destroy marriages found that it wasn’t money, as many people think, it was disapproval. We just cannot live under a constant cloud of disapproval, especially from those who are important to us. Not surprisingly, that holds true for Christian congregations. I know of pastors who have resigned from the ministry because of the constant barrage of disapproval. Nothing they did was ever good enough. And likewise, people have left congregations because there was no hope, just a constant drumbeat of what they must do and not do, from the pastor or from other members.

To deal with such disapproval, we must self-justify ourselves – as in self-righteousness, or we must despair and suffer, or must leave and avoid the pain.

So, does this mean that we are not to judge at all? As one of the most taken-out-of-context verses in the Bible, it is used by many, not for the sake of mercy, but for the toleration of evil. “You don’t like my gossiping? Who are you to judge?” “You think I should be in church? ‘Judge not, lest you be judged.’” “You don’t like my foul mouth? Don’t be ‘judgy.’”

But Jesus Himself tells us ***“First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the splinter in your brother’s eye.”*** When we have a sense of our own sin, then and only then are we to reprove a brother or sister. First, when we fear for their soul, as Paul instructed the Galatians, ***“Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any***

wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted." (Galatians 6:1, CSB) We go to them as one sinner to another for the sake of their soul, not to condemn them but to restore them to repentance and faith. For Christians, in repentance, can see clearly and we welcome them.

What Paul writes about is in harmony with the rest of Scripture, for example **"Do not harbor hatred against your brother. Rebuke your neighbor directly, and you will not incur guilt because of him."** (Leviticus 19:17, CSB) And of course Psalm 51 is familiar to you. We know our sin, **"For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me."** (Psalm 51:3, CSB), Yet in repentance, **"Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit. Then I will teach the rebellious your ways, and sinners will return to you."** (Psalm 51:12–13, CSB)

But for the most part, as we gather here, confess our sins together, commune together, and confess our faith together, there is no room for judging, or for that cloud of disapproval. For though you may know of the sin of someone, you know that they live under the righteousness of Christ, for they live in repentance and faith.

IV. Judgment God Doesn't Condemn

We also judge according to our various vocations in life. A more nuanced translation of verse 37 is, "Do not judge, except so as not to be judged [by God]." There are times when to NOT judge is to call down God's judgment, as we saw in Leviticus 19:17. Think also of parents, **"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it."** (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV) Think of Eli the priest who was struck down because he didn't correct his sons.

In verse 26 of this same sermon, Jesus said, **"Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for this is the way their ancestors used to treat the false prophets."** (Luke 6:26, CSB)

So we must discern false prophets. For **"For the word of the Lord is right, and all his work is trustworthy. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the Lord's unfailing love."** (Psalm 33:4–5, CSB)

As citizens of this country, we judge the affairs that are set before us, as sovereigns, and hold people accountable when they outrage what is right and good and true. **(Cit.)**

But above all we are merciful. ³⁶ **Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.** At any time, you may look around you: Everyone you see is an object of God's mercy. The blood of Christ was shed for him or her. I see you, and I know the blood of Christ was shed for you. You are forgiven; you possess the righteousness of Christ; you are clean. How can I disapprove of you, despise you, or turn away from you, for God himself has not, but "His face shines on you."

Amen.