

“The Quality of Mercy” Luke 6:36-42 Trinity 4 2021

Our Gospel for today is a discourse in which the Lord teaches us how to live as children of God. What does Luke 6:36-42 say first? "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." So, the model for our behavior is God Himself. And God is merciful. What does that mean for us?

If God is merciful, we must be merciful too. What is mercy? What are the attributes of mercy? "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

This does not mean we should not call what is bad “bad” or what is good, “good”. Many people say that the Bible says, “Judge not” therefore you cannot tell me my behavior is contrary to the Word of God. However, these verses do not say this. Sometimes we must talk to others about their sins, not to condemn them, but to rescue them from the consequences of their sins. We are not God, and in this sense, we cannot judge others, as we do not have the authority to condemn anyone to hell for eternity. God has the authority to decide who can live forever and who cannot live forever, because God can see what is in the human heart. We are not infallible judges of character. We can be wrong about what is the heart of a person, their true motives.

We can say some external acts are against the Word of God. To steal, to kill, to commit adultery, these things are not consistent with the life of a child of God. We say this as a warning to a person to get back on track. We are not God to judge someone for eternity. God knows who is truly faithful, who is saved, and the last day He will judge the living and the dead.

But in this world, the government is given authority by God to punish evildoers for outward actions, robberies, murderers, etc. As the church, we must judge our members if their manner of living is not consistent with the Word of God. But, we should always have the attitude of humility and compassion for others. We should not have the attitude of pleasure in uncovering the mistakes of others. God has forgiven us, so we must be willing to forgive others. Not to excuse what

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is bad, but to restore the individual to a good relationship with us and with God.

So Jesus used this illustration: "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."

This is the truth. God will judge all by the same law. He is going to judge us in the same way that we judge others. There is no favoritism with God. We must look at our own lives and our own sins before criticizing others.

This is love. The summary of the law is love. To fulfill the law is to love God and love our neighbors. What does the Eighth Commandment say? What's its theme? Do not bear false witness against your neighbor. This commandment speaks of lies against others, but not just outright lies, but gossip as well, whether the gossip contains some truth or not. We should not talk behind someone's back. As the Lord has taught us, if we have anything against a brother, we must first speak with him face to face. If we can not solve the problem, we must speak in the presence of two or three witnesses. If we can not solve the problem that way, we must entrust the judgment of a fellow believer to the church (Matthew 18:15-17).

We will try to live with others in peace and harmony, as the Eighth Commandment. Let's help our neighbor to maintain a good reputation. God has forgiven us of our sins, so we will forgive others. This is how to live as Christians. But we can not live in this way by our own strength. We need the help of the Holy Spirit. Let us ask the Holy Spirit's power to speak of the good of our neighbor, to avoid gossip. This is the recipe for the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.