

# Trinity 4

June 27, 2021

Luke 6:36-42

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Jesus said to His disciples, ***“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”*** (Luke 6:37)

It sounds like an excellent motto for a coffee mug or signs to hang within your home. But these are in-fact imperatives for life – Jesus is preparing and teaching the disciples and you how to respond as Christians within the world.

Over the past year, we have undoubtedly joined choruses of people making judgments upon our neighbors and weighed into the issues of the day. From the handling of the Coronavirus to the death of George Floyd to the protests and riots that ravaged our cities and capitol – everyone has formed opinions and approached the flames of controversy differently, often rendering personal, and at times, emotional judgments upon neighbors and institutions.

But, what guides man's judgment? What guides you in your judgments?

Over the period of unrest, I have reflected on how groupthink impacts us and how we approach life as Christians. Without everyday human interactions, man has been limited in various ways in how they receive news and information and how they keep up their interpersonal and communication skills.

For some of us, we have lost the good friends and family members who were fixtures within our lives – people God has given us to help ensure we stay grounded in the faith and keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. In some situations, the isolation of shutdowns saw us grow apart. In others, there has been a lack of mercy among brothers and sisters as we grow accustomed to sitting behind computer screens.

So what do we do when faced with the situations mentioned above? We grasp for like-minded neighbors to share in our misery. The Apostle Paul wrote, ***“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’”*** (1 Corinthians 15:33) Ultimately, it is the people closest to us; it is the information we read and take in that forms the outward judgments of our hearts.

But, what is it that the Christian is genuinely called to? It is to a life of mercy, Jesus says, *“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”* (Luke 6:36) Jesus is instructing the disciples and you to be images of the heavenly Father, your heavenly Father. Your quarreling with neighbors, your rebellion toward authorities in matters that do not affect your salvation or faith render you guilty of sin. However, God the Father has had mercy on you that His Son, Jesus Christ, died for you while you were still sinners. (Romans 5:8)

A significant challenge with our lack of mercy and forgiveness is that we don't actually trust God. We don't believe the First Commandment with all our hearts. And when you do not *“love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,”* then you are not able to love *“your neighbor as yourself.”* (Luke 10:27)

Justin Martyr, a Church Father, wrote, *“We pray for you that you might experience the mercy of Christ. He instructed us to pray for our enemies when he said, ‘Be kind and merciful, even as your heavenly Father is merciful.’ We can observe that Almighty God is kind and merciful, causing His sun to shine on the ungrateful and on the just and sending rain to both the holy and the evil. All of them, he has told us, he will judge.”*

The quote by Justin Martyr reminds us that we can see the kindness of God even in a world that continues to groan from the bondage of sin in how the sun continues to rise and the rain continues to fall upon the just and the unjust equally. Ultimately, it is God who will judge – as we confess in the Creed – *“And He will come again, to judge the living and the dead.”*

You see, when we attempt to render judgment upon neighbors, when we withhold forgiveness or fail to see the plank within our own eyes – we believe we have outgrown our teacher. Yet, Jesus says, *“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”* (Luke 6:40)

There is a catechetical aspect to our text today; to learn the way of the Christian life is to know the will of God expressed and given through the commandments. While the commandments render judgment upon us and reveal our sin when we do not honor God, parent or authorities placed over us, the commandments also show and guide us into the way of life and how we are to love and trust in God above all things, how we are to speak well of neighbors and assist them in keeping their lives, their families, and possessions. In these ways, we are guided into the likeness of our teacher, Jesus Christ.

Today, Jack was baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He was given this likeness – the image and name of God that gives life and salvation to you.

And yet, throughout this life, Jack will undoubtedly face tribulation and trial; he will be like us, tempted to quarrel first with his parents and then with the world rather than having peace in God. And for Jack as for you, remember these words Paul wrote to the Church in Philippi, *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6) What a comfort to know that when Jesus said upon the cross, *“It is finished,”* He meant it. Your salvation is secure.

None of this means we stop living in the world or remain unengaged with the worldly events that affect the Church and Christ's teachings. Instead, it gives focus to our lives that we are not burdened with rendering judgment upon man, that is, as we confess the role of Christ Jesus.

In a way, as the world transitions out of the strife we have witnessed over the past couple of years, we would be foolish to believe new challenges won't arise. But, we are wise to learn again how we are to speak to our neighbors and how we are to be merciful. For the Apostle Paul wrote:

*“Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And as servants of our Lord, do not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those in opposition according to God’s will. If God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, God be praised!”* (Paraphrase of 2 Tim 2:23-26)

What a joy and relief that when any of us encounter conflict in the world, we are not burdened with rendering final judgment or condemnation upon fellow man. In fact, it's not our work that changes the mind of man but that of the Holy Spirit given through the confession of God's name. It's His name and His Word that grants you a heart of gentleness, patience, and humility.

It is His Word that grants you mercy and forgiveness. Permit this Word to dwell in your heart richly and guide you both now and eternally into the way of peace. +INJ+

*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
Amen.*

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