

In Nomine Iesu

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity 2021

I once was blind, but now I see – Luke 6:36-42

“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.’ And Jesus spoke a parable to them: ‘Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother’s eye.’”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in whom we have mercy from God. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

In the Scriptures God-pleasing good works are called fruits of faith. They grow out of the heart that trusts in Christ. Just as a tree produces fruit according to its species, so the heart grafted into Christ produces works according to its new nature. A good tree produces good fruit, regardless of who picks the fruit, who distributes it, or who eats, it makes no difference: a good tree produces good fruit. It can do no different. For Christians it means doing what is good and right, regardless of who benefits from it.

I

Jesus said, “Love your enemies. Do good to them, lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.” God is kind toward us. He forgives the debt of our sins for the sake of His Son, sparing us the fate of a fruitless tree that is cut down and burned. To go through life not showing mercy is, as Jesus illustrated with another example, like the blind leading the blind. We will be led into the ditch of self-pity, self-absorption, and, ultimately, self-destruction.

Instead Jesus taught, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 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 to you.” God has not judged us as we deserve. He has not condemned us. He has forgiven our sins against Himself and against our neighbor. He’s given us “good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.” The psalmist makes clear what the will of God is: “The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.” (Ps 145.17) God is merciful not only to us, but to all. In the same way, He would have us, His children, be merciful to all whose lives we touch, so that they may know His mercy through us.

Jesus explained, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that

you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:44-48) God forgives a mountain of sin in our lives and heart. Yet often one unkind word toward us, one perceived slight, is more than we can bear. We want justice, we want satisfaction. But beware the measure you use, dear friends, beware.

That is the problem: the measure we use. There are only two measures of forgiveness. One corresponds to the question: What is the other person **worth to me**? How do I feel about them? What can they do for me? But when it comes to judging the worth of others, St. Paul warned: “You have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else; for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.” (Romans 2:1)

Do we really want the measure we often use for others applied to ourselves? But you might ask, what other measure is there? To that question Jesus replies: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.” Jesus said to the teachers of his day, “You blind guides! You strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel.” (Matthew 23:24) The blind man who leads another blind, does the second no favor. In the same way, swallowing a camel would not be good for your digestive tract. It is folly to try it. On the other hand, swallowing a gnat is not dangerous.

II

In fact, you probably have swallowed a gnat, more than once. If you have swallowed one, you probably just took a drink of whatever liquid was nearby and everything was fine. That is the comparison Jesus makes, encouraging us to think this way: “After all the difficulty I have given other people to swallow, can I not bear with my brother’s sins and weaknesses? Considering all my sins against God, can I insist on justice when someone sins against me? God forbid! I’ll just swallow the gnat. Chase it with God’s mercy, and I’ll be fine.”

We have trouble not judging, not condemning. We sometimes find it hard to forgive, even though God says: Forgive. Forgive 70 times 7 times. But by nature we are blind to such wise and merciful counsel. So He says, “Open your eyes, you who are blind. Look to Me! I sent My Son into the world. I allowed My Son suffer and die to save you from **what you deserve**. After that My Son poured out My Holy Spirit on you in Word and Sacrament so that you would know the sincerity of My mercy. See, I have given you a new standard of mercy, a new measure with which to measure out mercy to those who have offended you. **I desire you to use this measure** with others.

Dear friends, the measure God would have us use is to ask what the person who sins against me is **worth to God**, “who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” God places infinite value on all who sin, even those who sin against me. God’s love is measured out in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

We ourselves, along with the people who anger us most, who most get on our nerves, are joined together in this fellowship of the sinful. We are all the guilty. But we are

also those whose guilt Jesus bore, for which He was condemned and crucified. As the Bible says, **“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** And again, “God didn’t send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”

Jesus made the payment that covers all sins. Jesus rendered the satisfaction owed to you by all who have sinned against you, and against God. So ask yourself: Am I in the world? Is the one who sinned against me in the world? Dear friend, Jesus was sacrificed for the sins of the world. His sacrifice is the satisfaction, and it is more than enough. Blind eyes see only personal grievance and vengeance, the need to even the score. Such blindness leads to the ditch, and to the pit of hell. Blessed are all **whose eyes see** Christ crucified for sinners, and **want no more sinners crucified**. They want only Him who was crucified for our sins and raised again for our justification.

Jesus asked: “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Why does he have a splinter, but I a plank? How is that fair? But the answer is simple. He has a splinter in his eye, because it is his sin against me. I have a plank in mine, because in not forgiving him I sin against God, who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.

A splinter in the eye can make vision more difficult, but a plank in the eye blinds. In a similar way, straining out gnats is unpleasant, but swallowing camels is fatal.

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We are born into this world blinded by sin, and therefore inclined to get even with anyone who does us wrong, to return evil for evil. **But God opens our eyes to the forgiveness that is in Christ Jesus**, who gave His life for us all that we all might be reconciled to God and to each other. With our eyes opened to His mercy, God sends us back into the world with the truth that there are **two ways** to measure when we are wronged: law and gospel, sin and grace, and two kinds of behavior that correspond to them: judge or forgive. May God bless us to do what pleases Him, to see the truth He has placed before us in Christ, that to return evil for evil only leads to still more evil, and to the pit from which there is no escape. But to forgive is divine. It is the way of God, who so loved the world. It is the way that brings peace, now and forever. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

SRS – 6/27/2021