

Trinity IV

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[0 : 00] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Our gospel text for today contains part of Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. Judgment, condemnation, giving, mercy, and forgiveness are the options that Jesus lists for the disciples to choose from.

They can choose to learn from their teacher and receive life, or they can choose to live by the flesh. Jesus tells them in a parable that living by the flesh will make them as blind as those they are trying to teach and correct.

Blindness does not guide. Blindness misguides. Only true sight can provide the way for people to go. If the disciples of Christ walk in the true light of his teachings, they will become like their teacher. The judgment and condemnation of others is not the light of Christ's teachings, but rather the deception of the devil. Living a life of judgment and condemnation is the antithesis of becoming like the true teacher, Jesus.

[1 : 09] The result of that lifestyle is to become like the devil. The apostles did become like their teacher. We recognize and honor them today as saints that reside in heaven, joining with us in prayer that we may share in the same.

Just as the apostles had to choose between the way of life and death, we also have a choice. While making great leaps and bounds for the spread of the gospel, the apostles should not be considered as super-Christians.

We have the same call to holy living that they did. That calling is to live a life of mercy and forgiveness. We were baptized into the same baptism they participated in, in the baptism of Jesus, which restores spiritual life.

We receive the same body and blood of Jesus every week, and sometimes more, that they received when they were with him. We know, therefore, that we have the same calling as the apostles to love, forgive, and to give to those who are not good to us.

We are neither to judge nor condemn them. To understand what is meant by judging and condemning, we have to look at another passage of Scripture where our Lord mentions judgment.

[2 : 22] Jesus has said elsewhere in the Gospel of St. John that if we are to judge, we are to use righteous judgment. So then, what is the difference between righteous and unrighteous judgment?

Judging with unrighteous judgment is judging by appearances, according to the standards of the self. The Pharisees did this when they judged Jesus according to appearances, when he healed a man on the Sabbath.

According to the Pharisees, they were the ones in the right. The Sabbath was the day of rest. Anything done on the Sabbath, except circumcision, was to be considered as breaking of the commandment.

Jesus corrects the Pharisees due to a bad understanding of the very ritual that they practice often. Circumcision was a sign of life, of connection, of a covenant with God as his chosen people, Israel. Circumcision gave life in this way. How could making a man completely well be any different than that? In this way, the Pharisees did not judge with righteous judgment, but according to their interpretation of the law.

[3 : 29] As baptized Christians, we are called to get rid of our standards of how people should live. We must be merciful, generous, and compassionate, as our Father in Heaven is also.

For a moment, let us be completely honest with ourselves. Practicing righteous judgment is not easy to do. We may think that we know when to judge rightly. We may have judged rightly in the

past.

We may judge rightly in the future. Most of the time, however, we have exercised the kind of judgment that our Lord condemns in this gospel text. We have used our fallen understanding of certain situations, whether it be towards a friend, a spouse, a co-worker, a son or daughter, or even a random stranger, and we have used our standards of judgment instead of being merciful, forgiving, and compassionate.

Let us look to the Lord, the wise and blessed man of Psalm 1, who can make us a tree planted by streams of living water. We should meditate upon how our Lord was merciful to us, especially when we are not feeling particularly merciful towards others.

For the Lord tells us to take the plank out of our eye before we take the tiny speck out of someone else's eye. We all know the difference between a plank and a speck.

[4 : 50] Lastly, when we feel the need to rashly judge the actions of someone else, we should first consider ourselves. Have I been guilty of doing the things I'm about to condemn someone else for?

If the answer is yes, then we must judge ourselves instead. A great monk of the faith has made this comment about judging. Turn thy eyes back upon thyself, and see thou judge not the doings of others.

In judging others, a man labors in vain, often errs, and easily sins. But in judging and looking into himself, he always labors with fruit. We frequently judge a thing according as we have it at heart, for we easily lose true judgment through a private affection.

If God were always the only object of our desire, we would not so easily be disturbed at the resistance of our opinions. Judging others easily leads to sin, so we should not seek to judge others.

Instead, we should focus on making God our deepest affection and desire. When we make God our deepest affection and desire, we will be able to practice the teachings of our Lord without seeking to judge or to condemn.

[6 : 06] 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 unto 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. Our Lord is good, and he will provide us with strength, virtue, and holiness if we honor his commands.

Be merciful, as our Father in heaven is also merciful. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.