

Trinity IV

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[0 : 00] Be merciful just as your Father also is merciful. These words from our Lord recorded in St. Luke's Gospel are extremely relevant in our current context.

We have seen, we have witnessed the aftermath of senseless shootings in public places like schools and community parades.

We have watched in Hoare the reporting of 53 dead bodies found in the back of a parked Texas tractor trailer as immigrants were cooked to death.

There are many descriptions, many words that could be used for the current state of our culture, but mercy is not one of them.

All of what is happening evokes a sense of moral outrage in us for a time. But then we become a bit desensitized.

[1 : 09] We get caught up in ourselves and in our own schedules, and so we don't think about the moral collapse we see all around us.

The church, however, is not called to sit back and watch the world burn to the ground. We are called to lead the way in pressing forward for a better future.

One that is filled with hope, not despair or desolation. But how do we do this? How do we promote a better way forward?

Luke chapter 6 provides the way for Christians to be light in a dark world. Our Lord uses the following action words to describe what we should and should not be doing.

Jesus says, judge not, condemn not, forgive and give. Again, judge not, condemn not, forgive and give.

[2 : 19] And these four actions should characterize every Christian. So let's begin with the first two, which states what we are not to do.

That is, we are not to be judging or condemning others without first a proper examination of self. Our Lord says that we should not judge others until we have first judged ourselves.

In other words, we are called to make proper judgments. We are called to judge. We are called to call out wickedness.

But first, that begins looking at ourselves. Let me say this another way that will help us make sense of what our Lord is communicating to us.

We are not to overreact in a harsh manner towards others. We are not to condemn others. The first thing we are to do is to look at ourselves, to see our own shortcomings, to see our own sin, before we start barking at others and accusing them of wrongdoing.

[3 : 33] Jesus uses that analogy of looking at the speck of dust in another person's eye without first seeing the plank or the beam in our own.

He says it's not until we get rid of our own sin that we can then have a right judgment and a right response to others. Friends, we are called to judge.

But that begins with each and every one of us starting with ourselves. But the second two responses are just as important.

Our Lord tells us what we are to do. He tells us what we're not to do, but now he tells us what we are to do, and that is we are to forgive and we are to give.

We are called to be people who forgive just as we have been forgiven in Christ Jesus. And we are to be people who generously give to God and to others.

[4 : 44] And all of this takes us back to the very opening words of our gospel text this morning here in Luke chapter 6, verse 36, which states we are to be people of mercy just as we have received mercy in Christ.

Now at this point, I must stress something very important. This sermon is not merely about being a good person or a good citizen.

This is not the religion of the enlightenment that says be good because it will make you happy. And all of that might be well and true, but mercy is a characteristic that flows from genuine love.

And love is found based upon what scripture teaches. Love is found in God. He is the source and foundation of love because God is love.

And this love is made manifest through the mercy he has given to each and every one of us by way of the cross. You see, friends, we don't deserve mercy.

[6 : 01] It is a gift in the self-offering of our God by way of the cross. Mercy is not innate to our being. We do not have to teach selfishness.

We don't have to teach that in our kids. Mercy is a gift from God. And it's a gift we receive from Jesus.

And that mercy calls us to look at our own sin, our own moral failings, before we start passing judgment upon others. But mercy is then given by God to those who repent.

Repent. Repent. That is, looking at ourselves, confessing our sins, and desiring to turn away from those sins and turning our hearts to God.

And God continually offers mercy. His mercy never ends. To those who repent by welcoming his wayward and his lost children back.

[7 : 13] And to receive his life and his grace in the Holy Eucharist. Our Lord desires to share his mercy with all.

As we say in the prayer of humble access in the liturgy, which we will say here in just a little bit. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table.

But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have what? Mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood that our sinful bodies may be made clean in his body.

And our souls wash through his most precious blood that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us. That's mercy. Dear friends, this is the call of every baptized Christian.

We are to be people who judge ourselves before we make any rash judgment upon others. We are not to condemn with a spirit of self-righteousness and hatred.

[8 : 31] As Christians, we're not called to try to always one-up somebody or show people how dumb they are and how smart we are.

That's the opposite of mercy. That's arrogance rooted in absolute pride. We are to forgive others and then give to God and to our neighbor as a means of gratitude lavished upon us in Christ, which flows from perfect love.

And what this means is that we will practice a life of mercy. Jesus says in his famous Sermon on the Mount, Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.

This is the action God calls us to so that we can offer the world an alternative to the hate and the malicious rage that permeates a satanic promotion of the survival of the fittest.

Amen. Amen. And be assured of this one thing, mercy. Mercy will triumph over all hatred in the end.

[9 : 55] And that should make us all thankful people for the life-giving cross of Jesus Christ, which we receive together today in the Holy Eucharist.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. amen■■■■.