***“Be Like Your Father”***

**Luke 6:36-42**

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Ephesians 1:2, ESV) The Word of God from today’s Holy Gospel found in Luke 15: *“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”* (Luke 6:36, ESV)

1. The Holy Gospel this morning gives us one of the most abused of all Scripture verses. In his great sermon, Jesus told his disciples: “Judge not, and you will not be judged.” (Luke 6:37, ESV) Every critic of the Christian faith and of all who have a traditional understanding of the Word of God uses these words. They say, “The Christians say that without faith in Christ that a person has no salvation. But Jesus said, “Judge not, and you will not be judged.” They say, “The Christians say that sex apart from marriage is a sin. But Jesus said, “Judge not, and you will not be judged.” They say, “The Christians say that homosexuality is immoral. But Jesus said, “Judge not, and you will not be judged.”

2. If this understanding is true, then the Church of Christ in the world can never speak against any behavior or any kind of desire. This is the reality in many churches today. Jesus is a God of love, but a God without judgment. Many people, even within the church, say that Jesus preached love and acceptance of all people. Of course, Jesus preached that we need to love our neighbors. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27, ESV) Paul also said, “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13, ESV)

3. God is a God of love, Jesus is a Lord and God of love, and we need to be a people of love as well. The more important question here is this: What does God’s love look like? Does the love of God mean that we can’t speak God’s Law against others? Can Christians condemn the actions and beliefs of others? In the face of violence and death and hatred all around us, do Christians have to remain silent? Equally important, Christians are routinely forced to ask, “How should we respond to these events in such moments?” The most important thing is that we have the opportunity to present God as He really is.

4. The first words of the Gospel are very illustrative in this respect. Listen again to the words of Jesus: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36, ESV) Our goal throughout the Christian life is this: to be like our Father and be like our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus preached love. Jesus also preached repentance. His message was a message of repentance.

5. In chapter 5 of Luke, Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:32, ESV) He said in chapter 15 (which we heard last week): “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7, ESV) In Chapter 17, he said, “Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.” (Luke 17:3, ESV) And in the last chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke the Evangelist wrote the words of Jesus before his ascension: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Luke 24: 46-47, ESV)

6. Clearly Jesus preached a message of repentance. Remember that “to repent” means “to turn,” to go in the opposite direction. A person can’t repent without a life of sin to repent from. Jesus desires the repentance of every person. He wants repentance from false gods and false religions. He wants repentance from sexual sins…yes, the sin of homosexuality…but also the sexual sins of heterosexuals as well. He also wants repentance from sins of greed, envy, and lust. He also wants repentance from the sin of indifference to others who need to hear of a God of love. He wants repentance from hatred of our fellow man. He wants repentance from

7. When George Floyd died at the hands of a police officer, it was because we live in a world of sin. When police officers are killed trying to protect our communities, it’s because we live in a world of sin. We live in a world full of great evil and the power of Satan. When evil events happen, Jesus told us how to respond. Listen to this text from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 13: “There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.’" (Luke 13:1-5, ESV)

8. When there is evil in the world, repent. Don’t look for how to put the blame on someone else. Lots of people try to assign blame after something terrible happens. We might even try to do the same thing. If a man dies of cancer at an early age, did he receive a punishment from God? We can’t say. In the face of every kind of violence and every kind of evil, the correct answer is repentance, that *we repent*.

9. We repent so that we can hear God’s love for every sinner in the world, no matter what kind of sin you have. We repent so that we can share the Word of God with faithfulness to all others. We call sin what it is because God calls us to be compassionate…because he is compassionate. We can’t judge another person because God wants us to fight for the salvation of everyone. And we can’t apply the Word of God—specifically the Law of God—to others if we don’t apply the Word of God to ourselves.

10. Jesus said in the Gospel for this morning: “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.” (Luke 6:42, ESV) We need to condemn all sins. We are called to do this by Jesus himself. But it is not possible to condemn the sins of others if our own sins are not convicted in the first place.

11. Repent. We can’t be a faithful church unless we are first a church that repents. Repent and hear this message: that your Father is compassionate. Your Father delights in forgiveness of sinners. Listen again to the words of Luke, chapter 15 I read earlier: “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” (Luke 15: 7, ESV) Nothing is greater than God’s desire to save his people. Nothing is greater than God’s desire to give his promises to you. His joy is the joy that we heard last Sunday in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. You are a prodigal son who has returned to the Father in your confession of your sins. On receipt of this forgiveness that is yours this morning, you are like your Father. Remember that in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the father shared all that is his with his son. He put a ring on his finger, he put expensive clothes on him, and he killed the fattened calf for a feast. You are like your Father because your sins are eliminated. You are sinless and holy as the Father is holy and Jesus is holy. This gives joy to the Father in heaven: the return of sinners to the Father.

12. Let us seek this kind of joy here in our congregation. Let us want nothing more than to bring people to repentance through the word of God. Let us seek and desire the repentance of the thief, cheat, murderer, and homosexual. Let us seek and desire the repentance of the liar, the greedy one, the trickster, and lazy one. Let us seek and desire the repentance of the latino, the American, the Arab, the Asian, the African, and all people of all cultures. Let us seek and desire to be like the Father, full of compassion and mercy, as the Father has given us his compassion and mercy. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.  (Philippians 4:7, ESV)