

Trinity IV, 2006
Text: Luke 6:36-42
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✠Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ✠

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful – thus says the Lord. And you do know how to show mercy. You always show it to yourself. When you sin and do wrong you are always right there to make excuses, to explain everything in the kindest way, to assume that you had good intentions in mind but just couldn't carry them out. With yourself you are quick to forgive and forget – to move on and let bygones be bygones. But step outside the realm of your own thoughts and your mercy melts away like so much fog in the morning sun. Where your own sins seem reasonable and justified, you pretend to be shocked at the cruelty and spitefulness of your neighbor. Where you wish to wipe out the memory of your own wrongdoing, you've been known to ruminate on the hateful words spoken against you by another, to replay the scene over and over in your mind.

You, and all men, suffer from a very powerful ocular disease: the cataracts of sin which blind you to your own evil while somehow magnifying the sin you see in your neighbor. Your condition is serious, indeed, our Lord tells us that the cataracts have built up to the size of logs. Yes, a race of log-eyed hypocrites is what we have been since that first fall into sin. You remember how the history goes. When Adam and Eve turned their backs on God and fell into sin, they hid from him. When God asked Adam if he had eaten of the forbidden tree he replied, “The woman you put here gave me to eat and I ate.” You see how quickly the disease works. Already Adam had a fine-sized log in his eye blinding him to his own guilt and magnifying Eve's. And she fares no better in trying to push off her blame on the serpent. Both suffer from the desire to deflect blame from themselves and onto others, for they think that it is easier to blame and make excuses than it is to repent.

But they were wrong. Living with logs in your eyes is no way to live, indeed it can only lead to further infection and death. So repent. Give up on making excuses for yourself. Stop trying to justify yourself and your actions. Instead, come to the Lord Jesus for needed surgery. He wishes to extract those logs from your eyes. He has a plan for those two pieces of wood.

His plan is daring – it is the undoing of hypocrisy by climbing inside hypocrisy and blowing it up. Instead of pretending to be holy and good on the outside while being rotten on the inside – our sort of hypocrisy – Jesus, the eternal Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, He Who IS Holy, became sin for us. Where we pretend to be the opposite of what we are, Jesus became the opposite of what He is so that he might die the death we owed. The one righteous Man who ever lived – Man united to God in one Divine-Human person, suffered the greatest injustice the world has ever seen or will see: for he suffered and died the death every hypocrite deserved.

And that's how the log must come out of your eye. Jesus must take those two logs – one out of each eye – and lay them across each other to form his cross on which he dies for you. It is that personal and that specific. Jesus died for your hypocrisy and sin. He received no mercy on the cross because you have failed to show mercy. He was judged because you have earned a judgment of condemnation. And now you receive forgiveness because Jesus earned it for you. You receive the holiness that is His. You are free from condemnation before God because he lived a perfect and Holy life. All this is given to you free of charge. Though your sins were are scarlet, they are now white as snow – strangely make clean by the Blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Yes, this is the amazing love of God: that he would offer the Life of his only-begotten Son, the one who is Life, so that you might live. This is love and mercy past reckoning. We cannot measure the depth and breadth of this amazing mercy and love. We can scarcely come to terms with the mere shadow of this love and mercy shown in the life of St. Joseph, son of Jacob. For even after his brothers beat him and threw him in a pit and sold him into slavery and told his father he was dead – still after all that, Joseph forgave his brothers as we see in our Old Testament Lesson for today. How many of us would treat our brothers with kindness after all that? And yet the mercy and love of God is greater still by an infinite magnitude.

So rejoice, Christian, that the Lord loves you so and is so merciful. If you struggle with the log in your eye, if you struggle to show mercy to your fellow man, this is the only way to treat your ailment: turn those log-filled eyes of yours to the cross. Look to Jesus as he is nailed to those logs. Ruminant on his mercy. Replay the vision of God the Son pouring out his blood for you on the cross. Remember how he cleansed you, how he washed your eyes and ears and all your body in Holy Baptism. And do more than remember, come and listen to his creating voice as he speaks you into a new person in Holy Absolution: I forgive you, beloved son, dear daughter.

Most of all – taste the Lord's mercy and let it fill your whole being. For what Jesus offered in sacrifice to the Father so long ago on the logs of the cross, is now offered to you today for the forgiveness of your sins in the Lord's Supper. The very body and blood that bore the weight of your hypocrisy and sin is made ready for you to receive this day so that you might be filled with life, forgiveness, and salvation. So do not be afraid that you will be judged or condemned – Jesus has been judged and

condemned for you. Now all he offers you is mercy and life – he gives it to you today by giving you his body and blood, his very self in all his fullness.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Now the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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