

## Sermon for Trinity 4 – Luke 6:36-42

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

If there's any verse of the Bible that a non-Christian knows, it's got to be the second verse of our Gospel reading for today: "Judge not, and you will not be judged." Who are you Christians to judge against a woman's right to choose, someone's sexual orientation, or the man choosing to use the women's public restroom? "Judge not!" See, you Christians don't even obey your own Bible!

But let's don't forget that we too have bought into this lie about not judging, at least on some level. In the short term, life goes a lot easier if you "live and let live." You don't bother judging me and I won't judge you. You're happy and I'm happy. That way we'll both go on our merry ways down the primrose path to hell. Or as Jesus said in today's parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

So sin is not some neutral idea that we can control. It will always cause a reaction in us. Whether it be fornication, gossip, or holding a grudge--at first we consider it. We know it's wrong initially, but we dwell on the darkness of sin in our thoughts, in our hearts, and then in our actions. The longer we live with it, the more it festers and grows. Like Joshua and the Israelites entering the Promised Land infested with false god adherents, by one way or another, they justify NOT slaughtering them all, so we also allow sin to be pervasive without addressing it, even under our roofs. And all creation groans.

"Judge not, and you will not be judged." Well, the word still stands, doesn't it? And still, we're not free to apply it out of its context. Anyone can quote part of Bible for their own purposes. Ps. 14: "... There is no God." You see? The Bible says it right here: "There is no God." But you've left out what precedes it: "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God.'" So let's don't forget the context of the Jesus' sermon here. He's talking about how you act toward your adversaries when they persecute you: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who insult you." If you hadn't noticed, this world grows more and more angry with us who stand by the Scriptures. It becomes our enemy. As Christians, we find just as much friendship and love with the world as the sheep find with the wolves. The world is very mad and will not tolerate the Word of God by which we live.

Therefore our enemies will practice all kinds of cruelty against us. Not only will they not forgive us, they will not give us anything. They will also seek our livelihood and take it away by force and keep it. That's the way they will treat us. "Now where is your God?!" they will say. But under such persecution guard yourself. Don't be like them. When they condemn, you bless. When they take revenge, you forgive. When they take away, you give. When they judge unjustly, do not judge.

On the other hand, it's not at all right when people want to stretch this verse. "Judge not, and you will not be judged." It's not at all good to use this Scripture as if the Lord were speaking

about those who are commanded to punish wrong doing, like judges, police, mothers, and ... fathers. God has given them the office of judging and correcting. After disobeying his parents, if a child says to his father, "Dad, do not punish me and God will not punish you," this is no less than mercilessly baptizing injustice. If the serial killer says to the judge, "Do not judge me and God will not judge you," this is the epitome of wrong! When our vocation requires it, judging and correcting MUST be done and even praised. It's not that we delight in reprimanding people and rebuking them. We do it because it's God's order and command. And we don't just leave them there condemned, but comfort the distressed with the Gospel: that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and every sinner who believes in Him will not die eternally.

But if we continue to put off judging and if we shirk our vocation, then the whole country would be (and one could argue *is*) full of evil. The whole world would be a den of thieves. "If you steal from me, I'll steal from you. If you sleep with my wife, I'll sleep with yours." That's why judging is useful and even merciful. Wicked men are stopped and others are restrained from imitating them. And best of all, they're not robbed of the Gospel.

So fathers, it's cruel, dare I say even murderous when you don't judge, punish, and correct your children. In effect, you might as well slay them with your own hands. If you let him have his own way, you become his murderer. The gentle correction you give is FAR SUPERIOR to the deadly punishment and death blows given by this world that he would face later in life. Don't put off your responsibility.

We are not blind men leading blind men. We have the light of God's word to shine on our path. We have the 10 Commandments. We have the Apostle's Creed. Judge. Correct. Rebuke. Forgive. "Be merciful as your Father [in heaven] is merciful."

And God is merciful. He is the perfect Father who spared not the rods, the whips, the beatings, the betrayal, the slander, the thorns, the nails, the cross, and the abandonment of His only begotten Son for you and for your sons and for your daughters. The Father judges His Son as an ungodly sinner and executes His unjust death. He dies at the hands of Roman executioners on the logs of the cross for you and your children. And He thereby removes the logs and the specks and the hypocrisy that cloud our eyes.

And by the death of His Son on the cross, God judges you. Without works, by grace, through the redemption that happened by Jesus Christ, you are justified and saved. You are saved only through faith in Him, who was crucified and died for you, gave His Body for you, and shed His Blood for you for the forgiveness of your sins. God sits on the throne of His cross judging justly. He is your Refuge when you're oppressed. He is your Refuge in times of trouble. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠