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Christ the King Lutheran Church – Cody, WY
Fourth Sunday after Trinity
July 13, 2025
Text: Luke 6:36–42

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our Gospel text begins with powerful words, “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (vs. 36). I trust you can see the wonderful news this is for us sinners! God the Father is merciful. The Bible declares from beginning to end that God is merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Last Sunday, we gave a good deal of attention to the prophet Micah’s amazing description of God, “Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love” (Micah 7:18). The Hebrew word translated “steadfast love” (רַחֲמִים) can also be translated as “mercy.”

That Hebrew word is one of the richest, deepest words in the Bible. For it includes the ideas of mercy, love, faithfulness, enduring loyalty, and so forth. It’s an all-encompassing term used most of the time to describe God. Our heavenly Father delights in giving to His people His steadfast love and mercy; and He remains faithful to those who desire His mercy. He is no miser who grants mercy sparingly, doling it out little by little. No, He delights, takes pleasure in showing mercy and love by pardoning iniquities. Or, as the Lord Jesus says directly and powerfully, “...your Father is merciful.”

Immediately, we should be thinking about the Father’s mercy demonstrated in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the perfect life and atoning death of His Son, God the Father gives His steadfast love and mercy to sinners like you and me. In light of Micah 7:18 and now Luke 6:36, passages like John 3:16 shine even brighter, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” God the Father bestows His steadfast love and mercy by

giving His beloved Son. Jesus is the Father's divine gift of mercy and grace! No higher gift could be given for there is no greater expression of mercy.

The very Son of God in human flesh and blood is the Father's gift to a humanity that willingly sold itself into the slavery of sin, evil, and destruction. There is nothing in us that deserves God's mercy. Otherwise, it wouldn't be mercy. By definition, mercy is bestowing goodness, favor, and kindness upon someone who needs it but doesn't deserve it. Mercy is an expression of grace, of steadfast love, of loyalty, and so forth.

Even as Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit, we struggle with and often succumb to the allurements of sin. But the Father shows mercy by sending the Holy Spirit to work true repentance and faith in our hearts and lives. The Father is continually working a change of heart and mind, will and emotions in us so that we continue to seek truth, godliness, virtue, and above all things, love, rather than evil. In mercy, the Father forgives us in Christ and renews our lives by the ministry of the Spirit. God never stops showing us mercy, not for a millisecond of time!

But there's more! His mercy and grace are so expansive that God the Father even gives us the physical things of this world. Our Lord Jesus taught that the Father causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good; the Father sends rain upon the just and the unjust alike (Matt. 5:45). In mercy, the Father gives His earthly gifts to all people, those with faith and those without faith in Him, so that He sustains and enriches the earthly lives of every living thing.

In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther emphasized the gracious nature of God who gives all things such as food, drink, clothing, land, animals, friends, family "only out of fatherly, diving goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." Think about that! Your parents, your children and grandchildren, your neighbors, your country, everything you have are the Father's gifts! Because of God's mercy and kindness, we Christians seek to live justly and mercifully in this world according to God's Word. We delight in God. His joy is our joy. His life is our life. He is our priceless treasure.

But I also trust you can see the problem this verse creates for us. “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” In other words, God the Father is the standard of mercy, not our whims, wishes, or intuitions. Considering things from this angle, we see that John 3:16 not only teaches us God’s mercy shown to us sinners but also the standard of mercy we give to others. As God the Father gave Jesus, His greatest treasure mercifully for the good of sinners, so we too give of ourselves and our treasures to show mercy to the peoples of this world, including those who sin against us.

I would like to give an example from the Bible. Jesus called Matthew the tax collector to be His disciple and apostle. Upon Matthew, Peter, John, and all the apostles and prophets, the Lord Jesus will establish and build His Church. A tax collector in 1st century Israel was one of the most despised persons in Jewish society. Most of Matthew’s contemporaries would have rejoiced to see Matthew punished. He was a collaborator, a traitor to land, country, and religion. You might recall the derisive, scornful comments the Pharisees made about Jesus, “He eats with tax collectors and sinners” (Matt. 9:11). But Jesus, God be praised, had mercy upon Matthew.

And look what mercy accomplished! Matthew wrote the first gospel upon which the Church stands. Tradition records that Matthew died a martyr’s death in Africa while preaching Christ’s gospel. He gladly suffered death rather than deny His Lord who had mercy upon him, forgave him all his sins, and used him as an instrument to bring the gospel to the entire world, not only during his lifetime, but beyond. This is the kind of mercy we Christians are to receive and to share with others. “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” The standard of mercy is God the Father.

We cannot, we dare not, use ourselves as the standard of comparison. Remember, we are recipients of mercy. Not the measure of mercy. This is what Jesus is teaching us with the parable from the gospel reading. Can the blind lead the blind? Won’t they both fall into a pit? (vs. 39). The answer is intuitively obvious. The blind need someone who can see to lead them around the pit.

The second half of the parable is even more challenging and convicting for us. All of us have specks in our eyes (vs. 41). You know what it's like to get dirt, or sawdust, or some foreign object in your eyes. What does it do? It makes your vision even cloudier. Tears fill your eyes as your body is trying to wash out the foreign object. (Consider that natural phenomena baptismally, tears washing the dirt from your eyes!) Sometimes, your vision can become almost completely impaired. You can't walk properly, drive, or do anything until the object is removed. Not to mention the pain and discomfort it causes.

Jesus takes that common human experience and magnifies it. How can you take out the speck in your neighbor's eye when you have this huge log in your own eye?! (vs. 41). It's ridiculously impossible. Our vision is blurred by the logs of our own unrighteousness, by the deceptions stemming from our own hearts and minds. We need our vision cleared by someone with perfect vision. That person is God alone who sees clearly, impartially, and righteously.

Now, we can return back to our Lord's original statement, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." The Father removes the logs in our own eyes through His Son Jesus; His perfect human life, His bitter sufferings and death, and His glorious resurrection. Through the Spirit working in, with, and under the Gospel and the Sacraments, the Father removes the logs of sin from our eyes by removing them, sending them away as far as the east is from the west. Our God delights in pardoning iniquity and abounds in sharing His mercy and steadfast love. The cross of Jesus is the visual filter we Christians place over everything, including the sins and miseries of the world, our own sins and failures as well as those of everyone else around us.

We know the impossibility of removing the enormous logs of guilt, sin, and evil from our lives. We simply cannot do it ourselves. So, God the Holy Trinity, in mercy and steadfast love, does it for us. And He delights in doing so. It's simply marvelous. Does this not want you to sing the Kyrie again and all the more exuberantly, "Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy." And all such hymns that glorify the mercy of God in Christ!

Because of this superabundant mercy given to us in Christ Jesus, we now seek to share that mercy with those who have sinned against us. But let's not pretend. Removing the specks from other peoples' eyes is a hard thing. Bearing with the sins and weaknesses of a fellow Christian is not easy. That's why the cross of Jesus must be our visual filter. It wasn't easy for Jesus. But what does the Holy Spirit teach us in Hebrews 12:2, "...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus saw the joy, the delight, in showing steadfast love and mercy. With that joy set before Him, He endured the agony and suffering of the cross. He considered its shame as being of no consequence, nothing worth fussing about. The joy of love, of mercy, of forgiveness, of renewed fellowship between God and man, between man and man, that's worth it all. And now, this Jesus reigns in glory from the Father's right hand so that the joy of mercy, love, and forgiveness can be ours through Him.

"Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love" and mercy.

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

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." ¹⁶So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, ¹⁷'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them,

"Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE READING

Romans 8:18–23

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING

Luke 6:36–42

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the sixth chapter.

C: Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

³⁶[Jesus said:] "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

³⁷"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

³⁹He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴²How 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."

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise be to Thee, O Christ.