

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Be merciful. Judge not. Condemn not. Forgive. Give. These are commands. They are imperatives. They are directives from the Lord that tell you how you should treat others. The overarching command is to be merciful. God the Father is merciful.

Mercy is an attribute of God. To be merciful is to restrain oneself from punishing as is deserved. It is to actively relieve the suffering of others. Those who would be called sons of God are to be as the Father is - merciful. The other things our Lord commands, not judging, not condemning, forgiving, giving, all these God-like attitudes flow from love and mercy.

Mercy is the fruit of love. It is love shown forth. So it is only in mercy that you can see your brother rightly. Mercy is compassionate and long-suffering. Mercy blesses and helps. Mercy has the very best in mind for others. Jealousy cannot see aright. Pride cannot see aright. Neither can complaining or self-pity; Haughtiness or superiority or anger. For all these make a man blind.

They are all planks in your eye. They are not the fruit of love. They are sinful fruit. They are harmful to you and to your neighbor. By them you greatly exceed any speck of sin you may see in your brother.

But more, blinded by your own sin, you cannot see others clearly, so you can help no one - least of all yourself. Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? And is not that ditch into which sinners fall the abyss ruled by the devil and his minions, the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth?

Repent. Remove the plank from your own eye, that you see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye. Repent, for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

Thanks be to God, that in His mercy, in Christ, your Mediator, it is not you who are measured. God measures His Son in your place. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The One who took on all your sins was shown no mercy. The planks of man's sin were nailed together, and He was judged on that cross.

He is the true Scapegoat, a full measure of your sins poured into His breast. Condemned for the sins of the world, He endured separation from the Father as he was driven away alone into the ghastly wilderness of Golgotha.

Consider then, what God, in His love, in His mercy, has done for you in His Son. By receiving in your stead the judgment you have deserved He has made you free. By suffering the just condemnation of your sins for you He has removed your curse. By forgiving you all your sins

He has restored you to a right relationship with God and with neighbor. By giving, giving graciously to you, giving His life for yours, He has given you life without end. And all this He has done by being truly merciful to you, when no mercy was afforded Him.

Believing in Him, you are not condemned. You are forgiven. And to you God gives righteousness. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over is put into your bosom. For upon you is poured Christ's holiness, His mercy, His forgiveness, His giving, His withholding of judgment. And so are you delivered from the bondage of corruption and decay into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

You are freed from the shackles of sin in the Baptismal Font. That liberty is made yours when His Name is put upon you, when the Holy Name God gave to Moses and Aaron to speak over the people, to bless His chosen ones, when that Name is spoken over you. And there, washed in the Water that brings the forgiveness won by Christ's Blood, you receive the firstfruits of the Spirit, the deposit that promises a bountiful harvest of salvation. And by that Spirit you are led to extend the mercy you have freely received from God to those around you. It is the response of faith to the grace of God.

The plank removed by His Blood, you see clearly. So you know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you. For by faith, worked by the same Spirit, you groan within yourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of your body, on the Day that your Lord returns.

Until that day, the One who delivers you comes to you. He is at the Father's right hand as your Advocate, and yet He comes to you, personally and individually. In Word preached and read He enters your ears and changes your heart. In Holy Absolution He removes your sins. In Holy Baptism He gives you new birth. In the Holy Eucharist, by His Body and Blood He gives you the forgiveness and life that He won for you.

And as the Christ that purchased you rose from the dead, so also will you who believe in Him, all you who are baptized into His life, be called forth from blissful slumber to new life. And on that day it will not be the blind, but rather the Light Himself, that leads you. For He will lead you into Paradise.

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