

St Thomas and St Thomas of the Air Church
Fourth Sunday after Trinity
June 28, 2026
rmcneely+

Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful.
Judge not, and ye shall not be judged:
Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:
Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Today, Saint Luke takes us to a plain in Galilee
near the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry.
Here, Jesus speaks to a multitude of followers.
Some to hear what He had to say
Some for entertainment, in hopes of another miracle.

But none of them could have anticipated His words.

It was a new religion.
A new insight unto God.
It was thought provoking.
It was shocking.
It was wonderful.
It was terrifying.
It was a new way of life.

We break in about the middle of what would later be called
"The Sermon on the Plain".

As Jesus addresses the thorny problem of criticizing others.
The Summer Survey of Essential Christian Doctrine points us toward
the business of pointing out the misbehavior
Of friends,
Of Relatives
Of Complete strangers.

We know from our lives how the best intended criticism
Can quickly go awry
and ruin any hope of improvement
even destroying an important relationship.

Interestingly, hundreds of years later, the Church would
Select this Bible passage for the Ember Days
The time set aside for the clergy.
The time when the clergy are directed,
Schooled and disciplined.

It is occasionally necessary for the clergy to bring their faults
To the attention of those committed to their charge.
It is a sensitive task.
To be undertaken with the sole objective of improvement
Of salvation
Of everlasting life.

But all too often the clergy misses the mark and doesn't achieve the
goal.
And all too often, we offend
And do harm.
In the extreme cases, drive people away from the Church
Away from God.

The laity is not immune from the same problem.
We all know of cousins in the faith, who are harsh
and self-righteous
in the manner of their rebuke.

In fairness, perhaps some of us have fallen into that trap.

Was Jesus, 2000 years ago,
Mindful of such things
Happening today in our lives?

Was he speaking across the millennia
 To us, about how we should go about it
 When we must do something to try to correct
 A loved one,
 A friend,
 A stranger?

He begins with the advice that we should exercise mercy
 As our Heavenly Father is merciful.
 The objective is mercy not self-righteous satisfaction.

Next Jesus counsels: judge not and ye shall not be judged.
 And it is here that mankind often goes awry.

Is He saying that if we refrain from this business of judging others
 That we somehow have a “Get Out of Jail Free card”
 And will never see our own behavior judged?
 No matter how egregious?
 Could eternity be achieved that easily?

Is Jesus promising that if we ignore the murderous crimes among us
 That we escape our own judgment?
 That we must ignore the genocide?
 The kidnap, the rape, the mutilation?

This from the Man who stormed into the Temple Courtyard
 In Jerusalem,
 Fashioned a whip
 And yelled:
 “My Fathers House was to be a house of Prayer
 And you have turned it into a den of thieves”?

Doesn't quite line up, does it.

In fact, if we did not exercise judgment
 If we never condemned immoral and criminal behavior
 If we had no jurisprudence,
 Could any Christian Society long stand?

So what are we to take away from this Gospel to amend our lives?

Take a moment and consider the rest of today's Gospel:
 Jesus offers the parable of the mote and the beam.

A man seeks to correct his brother,
 But he fails to account for the beam in his own eye that
 Blinds him to his own faults.
 Jesus brands him a hypocrite.
 And counsels that he should first tend to his own impediments
 Before attempting to cure those of another.
 So the second piece of advice is
 that before we take on the task or fulfilling the obligation of
 judging another
 We must first put our own house in order.

Sound practical advice
 For who would heed the words of one
 Guilty of transgression;
 One without the standing to be able to point out
 the faults of others?

But is there more perhaps?
 Is there something in the spirit of
 "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven?"
 Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those
 Who trespass against us?

Are we to not only put our own house in order,
 But we are to go about the business of judging others
 As we would be judged by God?

To go about judging others
 As God judges us?
 As God will judge us?

Not from the spirit of arrogance
 Not from the base
 of demonstrating our self-righteousness
 But, we are to exercise judgment
 with a clear conscience and Christian good will;
 For the sake of the soul of the recipient.

The key is in how we go about it.
 The difference between making a judgment and being judgmental.

There are times in our lives when we must for a judgment
 about the behavior of another.
 And for the sake of the wrong-doer we must
 Draw a conclusion
 And speak out.

The key is in the words of Our Lord.
 The key is in the spirit of how we go about it.
 Never in arrogance
 Never in self-righteousness or self-aggrandizement
 Never in revenge
 Never in retribution
 But always in love, in Christian love.
 With the purpose and only goal being to restore,
 To return the wayward to God.

Perhaps I am jaded.
 After all, I spent a career in litigation, the object of which was a
 judgment of the Court
 And some of my work as Chancellor is to obtain the judgment of
 the Ecclesiastic Court under the Canons of the Church

But let me impart some of what I have learned:

If you find yourself in a situation in which you must express judgment and condemn;

Jesus tells us,

Do it only with the goal to restore and return.

Ignore opinion, innuendo, rumor.

Act only upon verified fact.

Be firm but be fair.

Judge only behavior.

Never even attempt to judge a human soul.

That is the exclusive province of God.

I said a moment ago that there is a difference between forming a judgment and being judgmental.

As we form judgments, a Christian must avoid being judgmental.

Sounds illogical doesn't it.

Jesus wouldn't think so.

Being judgmental is the tendency to form harsh and critical opinions

About others

Quickly,

Based upon a superficial observation or incomplete information.

Judgmental people seem to enjoy being quick to criticize

To pass moral judgment

Without the object of mercy

and the well being of the offender in mind at all.

Judgmental people seem to enjoy blaming other people's misdoings

On their character

While making excuses for their own mistakes.

Christian doctrine requires that how we go about this thorny business
Is every bit as important as what we do.
The spirit in which we undertake the responsibility is the key.
It must only be out of mercy and for the sake of the wrong-doer
That we condemn another.

The lesson for us is that
God will judge us in the same way that we have judged others.

Remember the Golden Rule:
Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.