

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful," surrounds the discussion about judgment and condemnation. Luke is not saying to allow sin, but calling us to forgive and be merciful to other believers. You are called to be merciful to one another, not because it is some random rule God set up. But because Christ was merciful to you first.

The law is not just a bad thing to condemn sinners and to judge mankind. The law is a delight to those who follow Christ. God has promised wonderful and good things to those who keep his law! Christ says concerning the commands of God: **"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."**

For a believer, keeping the commandments has an earthly benefit. Through our baptism, we have put on Christ and Christ dwells in us. By it, we are able to love the Lord and are able to walk in his paths. When we actually keep the commands of the Lord, Christ dwells in us and gives us his joy. A joy that is eternal and holy. A joy that does not pass away with the ages. A joy that is made more and more complete as Christ continues to dwell in you. A joy that will be made complete at the return of Christ. When you, with all the saints of God, will be resurrected and brought to the side of Christ to enjoy the new creation eternally.

All that being said, sadly, you know as well as I do that we do not keep the commands of our Lord. Day in and day out, we place ourselves, our money, our pride, and our selfish needs over God's law. This is precisely why Christ came to Earth. Because YOU do not keep every last one of the laws of the Lord, that is the reason Christ came. Christ came to show mercy to sinners. We in the church are chief of sinners. It is for this reason alone, to show the mercy of the Father, that Christ became a man. For your sin and for the sins of all mankind, the almighty God saw fit to wrap himself in human flesh and become one of us. To show mercy, the eternal God chose to become a babe, to live life as an infant, as a child, and as a man. So that the law might be fulfilled.

He became a man so that he might gain righteousness through the law. And then died a sinner's death and was cursed and damned on your behalf. He did all this so you can receive his righteousness, despite your sin, despite your life full of judgments, condemnations, selfishness, and grudges. Christ did not leave you judged and condemned in your sin. Christ was selfless and forgiving, to the point of laying down his life for the very people, for you and for me, who nailed him to a cross, so that you might be forgiven and leave your sin behind, so that you might turn from your wickedness and live. Christ received our measure in order that we receive Christ's measure. Christ is the one who is found guilty, while you are found blameless. He takes a cup pressed down with sin, full to the brim with the guilt of the world and you receive a cup, present here on this altar, overflowing with God's mercy, pressed down, shaken together.

Christ has come and spilled his blood upon the cross and because he has taken our place, we are called to speak and live as Christ did. Each one of us has sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. But we are not merely sinners. We are redeemed and washed in the blood of Christ. Through our baptism, our sins have been covered. The Old Adam has been killed, and the New Adam has been made alive. We are free to show mercy and to forgive and love one another, but also to encourage and expect one another to live according to the law.

As Christians, we must forgive each other, love each other, and sacrifice for each other. For while we were still judged, condemned by the law and our sin, Christ died for us. It is only by the cleansing tide of innocent blood from the cross that you and I can forgive. It is through the blood that the church emerges and exists. It is by Jesus's blood that we are constantly cleansed and forgiven. This blood rescues us from death and allows us to forgive and to show the mercy of God to each other. Every sin that is done against you and by you is already covered by the blood that dripped from the body of God, as he took what we deserved.

Let us show the mercy of the Father to one another. Forgiving one another and being patient, loving each other as Christ loved us. Not allowing each other to continue in sin, but calling each other to repentance and extending the blessing of peace when repentance occurs. Let us examine our

own lives and hear the rebuke of our Lord and turn and live. For while this earth and all people will continue to sin and to fall short of the glory of our Father. You have a God who became man, who does not desire to condemn but to forgive you, and gave you all the riches he has by taking your place and taking your punishment.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.