

15 S. after Pentecost 9/13/20
Psalm 143:2 19A

ENTER NOT INTO JUDGMENT WITH YOUR SERVANT,
FOR NO ONE LIVING IS RIGHTEOUS BEFORE YOU.

Question 93 from *Luther's Small Catechism: Who is God?* Then, to answer that question, the attributes of God are listed including:

Unchangeable. In other words, God does not change in His essence and His will. And that means **His Word** doesn't change. His Word is His Word. God's Word us as unchangeable as God is.

Sometimes, that causes you to scratch your head a little bit. Take for example, what God's Word says about adultery. God's Word says, "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex 20:14). So, one day, a woman who had been caught in adultery was brought to Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees told Jesus all about it, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such a woman". And they asked Jesus directly, "So what do you say" (Jn 8:4-5)? The Word of God says in Leviticus 20:10, "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" and they want to know what Jesus has to say about all this.

At first, Jesus says nothing. He's just drawing in the dirt. Finally, when He had something to say, He said this, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (Jn 8:7). And one by one they all went home, until it was just Jesus and the woman. And He look at the woman and said, "Where are they? Has no one condemned you? ... Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (Jn 8:10, 11).

So, you have the Word of God which says, “You shall not commit adultery” and that same Word that says adulterers and adulteresses are to be stoned to death. Yet, this woman caught in the very act of adultery, just gets up and goes home.

How about this one: The Word of God says, “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex 20:12). That is a Commandment that covers all authority that is over you – Mom & Dad in the home, the teacher in the classroom, the police officer on the street, the civil authorities in our cities, states, and nation. You are to honor them and obey them. But, your thoughts, your words, your deeds, your Facebook posts, and the speed you drive regardless of the posted speed limit; all tell a whole different story. In fact, they tell a story of rebellion. A story of stubbornness. A story that says, “I don’t like those God has place in authority over me”. By your words and actions, you show that you despise those in authority over you.

And, the Word of God has something to say about that. It says this in Deuteronomy 21,

“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear” (De 21:18-21).

So, honor your father and mother, those in authority over you, because if you don’t the stones will fly – in your direction.

Yet, you hear what Deuteronomy says about stubborn and rebellious sons, and no stones have traveled your way. Put this together: God is

unchangeable; He doesn't change. God's Word is **unchangeable**; it doesn't change. It says, "You shall not commit adultery," and yet, we see the woman caught in adultery -- and honestly, that can be us as well because Jesus says, "I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart," so we are just as guilty as she is -- she goes home and there is not a single mark on you (Mt 5:28).

Same thing with "Honor your father and your mother". If you don't, the stones will fly at you and yet no stones have been thrown at you, stubborn and rebellious children that you are.

How can that be? Has God misled us? Has God changed His mind? By no means. The truth is the unchangeable God has followed His Word to the letter.

To understand how that can be, we have to go back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve plunged mankind into sin, death, and hell because they fell for the lies of the serpent. There, God spoke to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Ge 3:15). Jesus is that offspring of woman; He was born of the woman, the Virgin Mary, to take your place, to receive the punishment you deserve for all your sins. The Bible says it this way, "[God] made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Co 5:21).

Do you truly understand what that means, Dear Child of God? It means that Jesus became the woman caught in adultery. Jesus became the stubborn and rebellious son. **Jesus became you**, taking your sins onto Himself, so that He could suffer the penalty and death of your sin.

And look at Him in your place. He is on His way to Calvary, carrying your cross. He has been betrayed. He has been rejected. He has been abandoned. He's has been beaten and crowned with thorns. When He gets to the place of the Skull, He is crucified and He dies and He is buried.

That's why the woman caught in adultery was not stoned. That's why you stubborn and rebellious children are not taken outside the city and stoned to death. That's why we can say with the Psalmist, "Enter not into judgment with your servant". The GOOD NEWS is that God entered into judgment on His son. God dealt with Jesus according to your sins, because Jesus was standing in your place. That's why you are not punished, but forgiven.

Which brings us to the parable before us in our Gospel this Sunday. WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR'S SINS AGAINST YOU? Remember and cherish the Gospel, God does not enter into judgment with you, Dear Child of God, because He dealt with Jesus according to your sins.

God forgives sins because He is merciful and because Christ Jesus has stood in the place of you, and every sinner. There's nothing --- did you hear me say that, **nothing** -- in you that moves God to forgive your sin – it's all about the heart and mind of God.

So it is with your neighbor who has sinned you, Dear Child of God. It's nothing about your neighbor -- how sincere their promises are or the depth of their sorrow, or if they are even sorry at all -- its about **YOU** – you who have been baptized into Christ. You are Christ to your neighbor. Living in Christ and Christ living in you, you enter not into judgment with your neighbor, but forgive them, just as God has forgiven you.

In our Old Testament lesson, we learn from the Christian life and witness of Joseph how to forgive our neighbors who have wronged us. Remember what Joseph's brothers did to him? He easily could have kept a record of their wrongs and exacted his revenge. But, Joseph did not enter into judgment with his brothers, but forgave them. It had nothing to do with his brothers – even whether they were sorry or not – it had everything to do with that fact that Joseph lived in Christ and Christ lived in Joseph.

My Dear Friends in Christ, forgiving your neighbor is life under the cross. In our sinful flesh, it is hard to forgive because our flesh knows only hate and revenge. But baptized into Christ, our sinful flesh has been put to death. We live in Christ. Remember well those words of Paul: "I can do everything through [Christ] who gives me strength" (Ph 4:13). Christ strengthens us with His grace through His Word so that we are able to forgive and, so much as in us lies, live at peace with all of our neighbors.