

Jesus teaches us to act like God. You can only begin to act like God if you know how God acts. You need to know how God acts toward you. And how does God act toward you? He is merciful to you. He doesn't bring you into judgment or condemn you because of your sins. He forgives you. He's generous toward you. He didn't even spare his only begotten Son. He gave him into death for your sins, and he continues to give you all good things. He gives you exactly what you need and when you need it. He knows when you need a lot, and he knows when you need a little. He knows when you need to suffer and be humbled, and he knows when you need relief from your suffering. He is good to you even though you don't deserve it. He doesn't cast you out, even though you deserve to be cast out. He is your gracious Father whom you know through faith in his Son. He is merciful. So be like your Father. Be merciful.

Jesus is the best preacher of the law. He didn't come as a new Moses. He isn't giving a new and improved law or an easier law. No, he's the one who gave Moses the law in the first place. He is the Lord who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and descended down on Mount Sinai with cloud and thunder. Jesus is the Lord God who brought his people out of Egypt and revealed his holy law to Moses.

But now, he has come in the flesh, not to give a new law, but to fulfill the law. He is the very mercy of God. He is the name of the Lord, which the Lord himself declared to Moses, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin . . ." (Ex 34:6-7a).

And yet, as he comes to show mercy, he doesn't put away the law. He did not come to abolish the law. He came to bring judgment. As he also declared to Moses, "He will by no means clear the guilty; he will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation" (Ex 34:7b).

This is what the law declares. Sin must be punished. There is no wiggle room. If you think you can just ignore your sin, then you are only putting yourself under the law's condemnation. Jesus does not mince words. The standard of the law is clear. You must be as God is. Just because you keep up appearances and uphold some outward requirements of the law doesn't mean that you have met up to this standard. No, you must be perfect as God is perfect. You must be holy as God is holy. This has always been what the law demanded. You must be like God. Love as God loves. Be merciful as God is merciful.

But notice what Jesus says here. He doesn't merely say, "Be merciful as God is merciful." He says, "Be merciful as your Father is merciful." Here Jesus reveals God as our Father. How is this? Jesus isn't just giving some generic name for God. God isn't merciful in some theoretical way, or some conditional way. It's not like he is willing to show us mercy only if we meet some kind of standard. No, Jesus is God's mercy for us. He is the propitiation for our sins, the atoning sacrifice, which turns God's wrath away and comforts us. He was born under the law to redeem us who were under the law so that we would receive the adoption as sons. And since we are God's sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, giving us the faith and confidence to cry out to God and call him Abba! Father (Gal 4:4-6)! With these words, God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and we are his true children so that we may, with all boldness and confidence, ask him as dear children ask their dear father.

Jesus is the Lord of the law. He gave the law to Moses in the first place. He is therefore under no obligation to render obedience to his own law. And yet, he put himself under the law for our sake. He, who is the judge over all the world, put himself under God's judgment on behalf of the whole world. He

who is innocent became the guilty one when our sins and the punishment for our sins were placed upon him.

So now, he who has fulfilled the law for us, who has rescued us from condemnation and eternal judgment, who has forgiven us of all our sins, bestowed on his own righteousness, kingdom, and heavenly inheritance – he now tells us: Be like your Father.

But isn't this still the law? Yes. It is. Doesn't this law still show us our sin and drive us to fear and trembling? Yes. It does. What do you think of when you hear these words? "Don't judge, and you will not be judged. Don't condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you." Don't they give you some pause? Do you really think you meet up to this? Do you honestly think that you never judge, condemn, or stew in anger toward your neighbor? You still have your sinful nature, don't you? You still have your sinful desires, don't you? Then you still need to hear the law. And the Lord who saved us from the curse and condemnation of the law doesn't teach us some watered down, easy-to-follow law.

Perhaps you may also think of how the world uses these words of Jesus. Don't judge. In other words, don't call sin what God calls sin. Don't judge. Therefore, you better not condemn whatever perverted things this world likes to celebrate. Those who make such statements are obviously fools. Jesus is obviously not telling us to approve of sin. That's ridiculous and stupid. Those who think this is what Jesus is saying are clearly under God's judgment. Those who celebrate June as Pride Month are under God's condemnation. This doesn't mean that they will stay this way. We shouldn't make that judgment, because we don't know. And we should pray for their repentance even as we ask our heavenly Father to lead us out of temptation. But the more they try to use Christ's words to justify their sinful behavior, the more they bring God's wrath upon themselves. God hates pride. It's an abomination. That isn't my judgment. It's not your judgment. It's God's judgment.

But Jesus isn't speaking these words to unbelievers. He isn't talking to fools. He is speaking to God's children. He is speaking to you who know the mercy of the Father. He's speaking to you who know how God acts toward you for the sake of his Son. God has mercy on you. God doesn't condemn you. God forgives you. All because of what his Son did for you. All because of his grace and mercy. So Jesus teaches you, as God's beloved children, to be imitators of your Father in heaven.

This means that we should examine ourselves. We should be honest about our own judgmental attitudes. But we don't need to justify ourselves. We don't need to make excuses. We don't need to point out how judgmental or unforgiving other people are. Because Christ is our righteousness. He is our justice. He is the mercy of our Father. Cast all your cares on him. Let him deal with it. We believe that he shall come to be our judge. He will judge the peoples with equity and righteousness. And we already know this righteousness in his cross, death, and resurrection. We know this righteousness as that which covers up our sins and presents us spotless and blameless before our Father in heaven.

So take Christ's words as they are. Take them seriously. Yes, he teaches us the law. But he doesn't condemn us. The law still exposes the sin and condemns the bad judgments of your fallen nature. But all the more, Christ remains your Savior, and his Father remains your Father. Jesus therefore leads you to apply God's mercy in your daily stations and duties to which God has called you.

So where has God called you? Where has he placed you? Are you are a son or a daughter, a husband or wife, father or mother, a student or teacher, a worker or employer, a citizen or neighbor? What

authority or job or labor or cross has God placed upon you? When you examine yourself in the station to which God has placed you, then you find that you already have plenty of things to judge and decide. You have children to train and discipline. You have workers to care for, a spouse to honor and support, a household to lead, a leader to obey, those under your authority and those in authority over you. In all of these stations, you have to make judgments. And when you examine yourself, when you take the log out of your eye, then you quickly realize how exhausting and overwhelming it is to carry out the basic tasks God has already given you. You realize how unworthy you are to lift up even a single straw before God.

When you worry that others are judging you, then you are already judging them for supposedly judging you. Why would they be judging you? Is it perhaps your own conscience that is judging you? Jesus exposes this hypocrisy that still dwells within us. But he still doesn't condemn us. He gives us peace. This is peace in your conscience, the peace of knowing that God forgives you and provides for you, so that you may be content wherever he has placed you. He loves you. He cares for you. So cast your cares upon him.

A pupil is not above his teacher. Jesus was free from the law's judgment, but he put himself under it to free us from condemnation. He did this out of love, out of mercy and kindness for poor sinners. We are therefore free from the law's judgment. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This means that we are under no obligation or coercion of the law. We are under God's grace. We are free, declared righteous through faith in Christ. But we remain his pupils. He continues to teach us and train us. He teaches us to bear the burdens of the law, not to gain salvation, not to merit God's grace, but out of love flowing from faith and a good conscience. We thereby learn from our Savior to find peace in his mercy no matter where we are in this earthly life.

When Jesus suffered, he did not threaten. Instead, he commended himself to his Father who judges justly. He teaches us to do the same. He trains us to be like him. Follow in his steps. If you have to suffer for it, if people don't appreciate the work you do, if they mock your confession of the gospel, if they take advantage of you, judge you, condemn you, insult you, and hold things against you, then what's that to you? Look at how the Father treated his beloved Son. He had him bear the insults of the world. He had him bear his own wrath. He did it all for you. But he didn't leave his Son in the grave to rot. He raised him from the dead. He set him at his right hand and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

Dear Christians, he gives this name to you. He remains your God of all grace and Father of all mercy. And he doesn't leave you in the dark to figure out how to live in this dying world on your own. If a blind man leads another blind man, then both will fall into a ditch. But you are led by Christ. You walk in the footsteps of him who took away your sin and does not bring you into condemnation. Whatever you lose in this life, he will give back a hundredfold. We know this already in the gospel. We have this in his body and blood, which he still gives us to eat and drink as a constant token of his grace and favor. Here, in his words of grace, you have the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. You have the hope of God's kingdom. You have his good measure, pressed together, shaken down, running over, and put into your ears, heart, and mouth. So make use of this good measure. And be assured that it will, by God's grace and mercy, be measured back to you. Amen.