

The Sixth Sunday After Pentecost – 2021

Ezekiel 2:1-5

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Mark 6:1-13

How many of y'all have ever felt judged? Notice that I didn't say: "How many of y'all have ever *been* judged?" There is a difference and we'll get to that by and by, but let's stick with the first part: "How many of y'all have ever *felt* judged?" Pretty universal, right? Eyes that bore into your soul, eyebrows raised to an unnatural height at whatever you've been doing, whatever you've been saying. If you've worn a mullet in the wrong decade then you know what this feels like. If you get your fashion sense from Madonna, if your car lost its muffler two years ago and you haven't bothered to replace it, if you dare to say that you voted for Trump in the teacher's lounge, well then, you've likely *felt* judged.

Cain offered a sacrifice to God that didn't go so well. Here's how the Scripture puts it: "And the Lord had regard for Abel and His offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard" (Genesis 4:4). Faith; Cain lacked it. Nothing you can do as an act of religiosity is pleasing to God if it is not done in faith, faith in His Son. "Apart from faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Cain was fairly bummed by the sacrifice debacle. Again, here's how the book of Genesis puts it: "So Cain was very angry and his face fell" (Genesis 4:5). Obviously aware of Cain's disposition, God visits the son of Adam. God doesn't make small talk. He doesn't pretend that He's oblivious to the sin that is aroused in Cain's heart. In love, in mercy, in Fatherly devotion God said to Cain: "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7).

If all this was on social media, Cain would have tweeted: "That God! What a Judgemeister! Why doesn't He just lay off. I *got* this. Ain't nobody gonna tell Mr. Cain what to do. Go on back to Your throne-room, Mr. Creator Dude." Did Cain feel judged? Probably. Was it just? Most definitely. After murdering his brother, Cain would feel the weight of God's judgment. Now, how many of y'all have ever *felt* judged? By your fellow man, I mean. Do you ever ask yourself if it is just? Some folks are genuinely helpful to us when we get off the path. St. Paul writes this: "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1). One of the most misunderstood passages in Scripture is this: "Judge not, and you will not be judged" (Luke 6:37a). There's more to that verse, more to that idea, more to Christ's teaching than what is just quoted in pop culture, quoted in lazy Christianity. The rest of it is super important and it's super important right now.

You are about to be judged. Christians as a whole are seemingly a hair-breadth away from having all the ills of society hung around our necks. The unbelieving world has always been at enmity with Christ's church, in a cold war of animosity that begins in a lake of fire. Pharoah and Herod were both cold-blooded killers, egged on by the one who was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). Satan has always wanted to put Christ's church in the dock. Christians will be put on trial and we will be judged by those who spiritually blind. St. Paul wrote this: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Jesus came to His hometown, came to Nazareth and was invited to teach in the synagogue. As you might suspect, the Lord Christ had a big impact on His audience. He spoke with uncommon clarity. His insights into God's Word were unique, joyful, illuminating the minds of those who listened. Conviction was in His voice. Understanding both His subject matter and the hearts of those He spoke to, His Words carried piercing wisdom. Clearly, this Man possessed authority. This was not a derived authority, not a mastered authority. Jesus' authority, it emanated from within Him, it *belonged* to Him. It sounds crazy, but the people who listened to Jesus teach were inspired and they were offended. To be sure, they were judging Him.

“Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him” (Mark 6:3). How were they judging? Why were they scandalized by the Son of God? They saw a mere carpenter, a teacher without glamour, without the worldly trappings of power. St. Paul writes that God's power is made perfect in weakness. In Nazareth, the folks believed that God's power is made perfect in more power – raw and imposing and awesome. Is it possible that those folks knew that Jesus was God's agent for salvation and they didn't particularly care to have a Savior like this one? He wasn't sleek, wasn't wealthy, wasn't flashy – the Son of God laid aside His divine prerogatives and took up the form of a servant – and the home-townies took offense. Do you believe that that reaction is unique to that time, unique to that place?

Listen to this, because this applies to you: “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer” (2 Corinthians 5:16). The world used its empty wisdom to condemn Christ to the Holy Cross. The offense which was aroused in the people of Nazareth would be echoed by those at Jerusalem: “Crucify him.” “Shall I crucify your king?” “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15). “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:11). That is me. That is you. The Son of God could well judge us, the sin we have committed, the paltry devotion we afford Him, the selfishness, the designer morality we construct for ourselves, the hide and seek game we play with our Lord – giving him that part of ourselves which is easy to give and holding back that part we want to keep for ourselves. The Son of God could well judge us and find us woefully lacking. But He dies instead. He dies, crucified, bearing *everything* that deserves to be judged. “Crucify Him” is His Father's judgment against me/you. Jesus begged His Father that you might be forgiven, begged His Father that He might atone for your sin. This is what He said: “Father, glorify your name” (John 12:28). Christ's sacrifice and your forgiveness is How God glorified His name.

Jesus died for the unbeliever who judges you. Remember that; Jesus had to die for the person who sits in judgment against your faith. Jesus willed to die for them, gladly gave His life for them. In unending love, in eternal mercy, spilling the grace of His precious blood – Jesus died for those who judge us. As we face mounting calls for the church to be stifled, modified to suit the state, modified to suit the mob, we will defend our rights but we will not abandon what it means to be followers of Christ. Listen to the rest of what Jesus says in Luke regarding judging: “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:37f.). We are a forgiving

people. It is a mark of Christ's wounds that we will not hide. We will show people Christ's wounds – we will forgive as we have been forgiven. We will forgive the people who judge us. We are far more interested in reflecting Christ than ensuring that the world respects us. We belong to Him! We have been redeemed from that crazy judgmental circus that is all around us. We have found our home in this place.

This holy house is Christ's hometown. He has come to His own this day, and we receive Him. In humble bread and wine, the Lord of heaven and earth cloaks His glory and feeds you with Holy Food. He judges you righteous, for you are in Him. He judges you righteous, for He is in you. God's weakness is stronger than man's strength. We boast of His cross; we boast of His death; we boast of His resurrection and we boast to be found where sinners congregate to greet their risen King and receive His grace in Word and Sacrament. His grace is sufficient for us. His grace is more than sufficient for us.