

THE 4TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY - 27 JUNE 2010
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Luke 6:36-38 (KJV)

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. [37] Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: [38] Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

It is interesting that Jesus combines giving with *forgiving* in this passage from the Gospel according to Saint Luke. It tells us all that; one, not to judge others and, two, that with what measure we give or forgive, it will return to us in ways that we cannot measure.

We cannot imagine the blessings that we will receive if we truly either give or forgive.

We were told last week by Saint Peter that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. We are told by the Fathers of the Church that pride is the greatest sin in that it leads away from God into other sinful actions and finally as in the case of Adam and Eve it leads to death, eternal death.

Today we are also told to be merciful.

We can only expect God to be merciful to us, we can only expect God to be merciful to us in the same degree that we are merciful to others. On that great day when we all will have to come face to face with our Lord, we can only expect Him to be merciful to the extent that we were merciful, merciful to others.

Jesus told Saint Peter that we should forgive our brothers, we should forgive each other, not seven times but seventy times seven, an amount that represents infinity scripturally.

We here at St. John's are a family, an ecclesia, a gathering of Christians that come to worship God in a certain way, a classical Anglican way. We here at St. John's are not here as nor are we structured ecclesiastically as Baptists or Presbyterians. We are not a congregationally structured church, rather we are an episcopally structured parish. That does not mean that we are Episcopalians, it means that we are organized under bishops, bishops that are elected by their respective dioceses to lead and to direct the Church. These bishops, in turn, form the greater Church through a connections called intercommunion.

We here at St. John's are a Mission Parish of a diocese headed by a bishop assisted by other bishops, all duly elected by the membership of the diocese through our diocese synod comprised of the clergy and elected parish representatives. In our case we are a Mission Parish of the Diocese of the Eastern United States in the Anglican Province of America. Our bishop is the Most Reverend Walter Grundorf.

St. John's is a Mission Parish not a full Parish. Mission parishes are by structure and canon law, the law of the church (in this case an episcopally structured church) the bishop's congregations. The bishop of this diocese is the pastor. Bishop Grundorf is the Pastor of St. John's and all other missions in the diocese. Since it is totally impossible for him to be at each one of the missions each and every Sunday, he appoints a priest to stand in for him. This priest is called a Vicar.

The title Vicar comes from the same root word as the term vicarious, the Latin word vicarius, spelled v-I-c-a-r-I-u-s meaning substitute. In our case and soon in All Souls' case, that substitute for Bishop Grundorf is me.

In most if not all cases, the priest that is appointed as Vicar over a mission has been interviewed and accepted by the mission through some manner of a search committee.

That was the same process that I went through. I came up and was interviewed and was some time later invited to be your Vicar with Bishop Grundorf's approval and

endorsement.

Now, you as St. John's Mission are being asked to make a change. Maybe that is better described as that you are asked to make some changes. The first is that I, as your Vicar, will also become the Vicar at All Souls, Asheboro. The second change involves moving the starting time of our Sunday Mass to nine o'clock from the long-standing nine-thirty.

And you feel that you have no say in it.

Here's where the giving part (and sometimes the forgiving as well) of this homily comes in. Remember we are supposed to forgive seven times seventy.

We all wish that we had enough priests to supply every outpost of the church in every part of the church, but that is not the real world.

I have been asked to be flexible in this matter and you also have been asked to be flexible. I ask you also to be forgiving.

This is not Bishop Grundorf's doing and it is not my doing nor is it either of ours wish. It is because it is the only option available at this time.

I know that there are some of you that are upset and that have made it known through telephone calls to other members to attempt them to help you oppose this matter and this move.

I forgive you.

I forgive you just like I have forgiven you for the calls that were made in opposition to the property purchase.

But, in this case, we pretty well have our hands tied by circumstance. Father Mark,

Father Sam and I have had some conversations and will meet as soon as possible to explore other possible options.

Until then, the only option is for St. John's to move the time to nine o'clock and All Souls to move their's from 10:30 to 11 or 11:15 in order for the celebrating priest to make the trip.

This is real world. Although we are trying to be sensitive to everyone's feelings as best we can, the ultimate decision is Bishop Grundorf's and mine. That again is the real world.

Amen.