

SERMON – THE 4TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY – 15 JUNE 2008
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Luke 6:36-37 (KJV)

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. ³⁷Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Over the last few weeks we have heard the words of Saint John and Saint Peter admonishing us to love one another as Christ has loved us.

We hear each Sunday that we are to love God with our entire being, our hearts and souls and minds, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Father Bill Weston at Saint Barnabas Church in Atlanta reminds his parishioners to pray for those they love and those they find difficult to love.

We are constantly being reminded in our readings each Sunday that love is the key element in our lives as Christians. I say reminded, but maybe bombarded is a better term to use.

Love, being such a key aspect in our faith or belief system, makes it such a disturbing factor when we fail to always practice it, and fail we will at times.

Life, at best, is progress not perfection.

God calls us to be perfect **Matthew 5:48 (KJV)***Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

But as Paul complains and we can identify with **Romans 7:15 (KJV)** *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.* or as a more modern translation puts it **Romans 7:15 (ESV)***I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.*

We all live in a world of imperfection, a world in many cases devoid of love and compassion. We are called, even commanded, to love our neighbors and to love one another and this can be a most difficult task at times. Just as the tectonic plates of our planet earth grind against each other creating earthquakes, each of us have a certain friction factor involved as we interact with each other in any group or congregation that we are part of.

It is inevitable that there will be from time to time events that will happen as a result of those frictions in individual relationships. Those events may be inevitable but they need not be disruptive to the group or to the congregation.

Where there is love, where there is mercy, there is forgiveness. We are all reminded each time we pray the Lord's Prayer to forgive those who trespass against us.

None of us is perfect but none of us, I feel, in the context of Christian love ever wants to deliberately offend another.

As in all families, a church congregation is comprised of individuals, each of whom has their own talents, their own gifts and their own foibles and failures. As Paul tells us, we are all part and parcel of a larger body, the Body of Christ.

Just as an individual's back may hurt one or their big toe the next, there are going to be times in this Body of Christ when one member is going to be in pain or is going to offend another.

But the body continues on if there is understanding, if there is forgiveness, if there is love, if there is mercy.

Just as God forgives us our shortcomings and our failures, we too are called, in love, to forgive those that offend us, that injure us.

We have to rise above the event, the action, and go ahead with life.

We have to keep our eyes focused on the Cross.

Jesus died on the Cross so that we could be forgiven, so that we could be forgiven for the actions of one man, the actions of the one man we call Adam that committed the original sin, the original sin that brought us all death.

If God in his incarnate form could do this for us, shouldn't we then be able to love one another enough to forgive one another our individual failings.

Saint Peter wrote, *1 Peter 4:8 (ESV) Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

Jesus on the Cross forgave his executioners *Luke 23:34 (KJV) Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

Jesus by his death on the Cross forgave us our sins, atoned for our sins.

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. ³⁷Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Amen.

