

# Trinity 4

*"First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye."*

At Pentecost, Jesus gave His Holy Spirit with his 7-fold gifts:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control.

Since then, we have seen the patience of Lazarus and the love we are to have.

We have learned the true joy of the wedding feast.

And last week we saw the patience of the Triune God in seeking the lost.

Today the focus is on God's peace--both toward us and in us.

*"the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."*

Peace is a result of God's countenance--His mercy--lift up on you.

And peace toward others is a result of your mercy toward them.

So the Gospel begins, *"be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful..."*

Mercy and peace go hand-in-hand. God gives us peace by being merciful to us.

Then, Jesus goes on to teach that mercy begins with self-examination.

Consider the last time that you had conflict with a relative, friend, or a spouse.

Without doubt, you did something to contribute to the situation.

Perhaps you reacted with fiery words that upped the ante.

Maybe you exaggerated your case or spoke ill of your enemy.

Even if you only grumbled about that person only in your heart you poisoned your own attitude and made yourself prickly and difficult to approach.

Any words or thoughts not determined to heal the breach but only to defend yourself make you a contributor to the conflict.

Paul writes: *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."* (Eph 4:29)

Not only what you say and do, but also what you do not do are sins.

If you fail to do someone good simply because they have hurt you first, then you with your sin have become a contributing factor in the conflict.

Failure to speak a kind word, to compliment or simply talk is a sin against them.

One good way to examine yourself is to ask questions based on the "golden rule"

- If our positions were reversed, would I want another to have these feelings or behave this way toward me?

Honesty in this self-examination begins the peace, because it reveals your own sin and prepares the way for God's mercy and peace upon you.

And don't fall for Satan's lie telling you that your sin is less than another's or is not really the cause of the problem.

For as Jesus shows by His entire existence, mercy gives peace while the withholding of mercy continues to effect division.

Until you have confessed your own lack of mercy, you have not yet come to repentance and, therefore, you are not dealing honestly with your sins.

Jesus, today, calls you to examine yourself and to admit everything that you have done to contribute to the problem BEFORE you begin to address the other person's sins...! *"First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye."*

To examine yourself honestly is to open your eyes, ears and mouth to every possible manifestation of your sin and to repent of it to God and him.

This is not merely some way of manipulating your enemy into repentance toward you. It is rather, true confession to God seeking His mercy and peace.

*"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."* (1 Cor. 11) This is an exercise that you should do, not only occasionally, but every time you approach the Lord's altar.

(This is what lies behind the sharing of the peace.)

It is God's mercy that desires this peace for you. A loving God will not let sins go unaddressed that stand as a roadblock to your peace..

That, often, is why he raised up a person to oppose you.

This person and conflict are God's gifts to lead you to self-examination.

To see things this way, is not to contort or dismiss the wrongs of another.

We can still honestly and forthrightly know that the other has sinned.

But you can begin to see that person — and even their sins against you — as the instruments of a loving God who wishes to bring you to repent.

So Luther teaches while expounding on the 3rd petition (Thy will be done): "Help us not to become angry or vexed, not to curse, complain, protest, condemn, disparage, or contradict [when what we will is prevented by others]. Help us to speak well of such adversaries, to bless them, and to do good to them as persons who are carrying out your best and godly purposes in contradictions to our own will... Let us not ascribe to the devil or evil persons anything that happens contrary to our will, but solely ascribe this to your divine will which orders everything that may hinder our will in order to increase the blessedness of your kingdom." (PPB, 1522)

It is always God's mercy and love that invites you to self-examination.

And when God in His love and concern for you has brought you to confess your sins that you have contributed to your conflicts—

When God has graciously shown you that those sins are committed against HIM even more than they are committed against your brother...

Then God also blesses you with peace by granting the forgiveness of your sins.

This forgiveness, this undeserved mercy, in turn melts your heart to be merciful to those who have sinned against you.

And just as God's mercy toward you also fully restores you to peace with Him and to an open and joyous desire to be with Him.

So also your mercy toward your brother does the same.

This is not just FIRST step to take before getting on to the business of criticizing your brother's speck... It is the goal and purpose that Christ desires for you.

God wishes you to live with clear and unobstructed vision and He provides this for you through Christ Jesus.

Your ability — in Christ — to now help your brother with the speck in his eye is no longer motivated by self-preservation or retribution.

Rather, it is a genuine outworking of the love that God has poured out ON you and now wishes to pour out THROUGH you.

"Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom." Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

P With our God is the fountain of life. Let us turn to Him in confidence as we say: "Lord of life, Lord of love, have mercy and hear us."

P Let us pray for the Church, that throughout the world she may witness to the power of Christ's Word, a Word that calls the dead to life. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us pray for our Synod as preparations are made for its upcoming convention, that God would grant wisdom to the delegates as they prepare to deliberate on important issues facing our church body. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us pray for our nation, that God would grant us wise and faithful leaders, and that we would learn to cherish and protect the weak and the vulnerable, especially the unborn, the widowed, and the aged. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us give thanks for the freedom that has been preserved in this nation for past 231 years, asking that God would continue to bless us and to use our freedom for the good of all. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us pray for those who serve in the armed forces of our land, especially for those who continue to serve in Afghanistan and Iraq, that they may diligently carry out their duties and be protected from all harm and danger. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us pray for this congregation, that we would grow in our love for one another and in our witness to our neighbors. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us pray for those who serve in the medical arts: for doctors and nurses and all those who care for the sick, for hospice workers and all those who tend the dying, and for all who conduct medical research, that God would bless them all in their vocations and use their work to further a culture of life. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us pray for the suffering, the dying, and the grieving (especially \_\_\_\_\_), that Christ would speak the Word that sustains the weary, bringing them the peace that passes understanding and granting

to each His healing. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us pray for those who commune today, that they find at the Lord's Table the gift of life everlasting in the Savior's body and blood. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Let us give thanks to God for the saints who have gone before us, asking that God would grant us a share in their eternal joy. Lord of life, Lord of love,  
C have mercy and hear us!

P Father, the Source of all life and the life that never ends, receive our prayers this day which we offer to You in the name of Your beloved Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
C Amen.