

Judica with the Rite of Holy Baptism for Holland Kayte Clem and John Robert Reinhold Ulmer  
18 March, Anno Domini 2018  
St. John 8:42-59  
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The question at the heart of this conversation between Jesus and the Jews is absolutely critical. What is at stake is the very character of God the Father. If the Jews are the rightful sons, then the Father is a tyrant whose wrath must be satisfied by vigorous obedience and strict adherence to the moral and ceremonial laws. Their father is father of the outwardly good, holy, and pious. His mercy is only for those who first show themselves worthy of it. The children of this father are either filled with arrogance because they vainly imagine that they done that which the Law demands or they are filled with despair because they are supremely aware of their guilt and know that they will never be able to live up to please the Father and gain His love.

This is the god of every religion outside the true Christian religion. It doesn't matter what you call this god, he is the same. And in truth whatever you call him, he is Satan. This god is a monster who knows no compassion, who judges only according to what is equitable and fair. He doesn't hear your cries for pity or deliverance. You are solely responsible for yourself. Your problems are your problems alone. If you try hard enough, just maybe He will take notice of you. This is the Father that we will see when we try to know Him according to the Law.

This is the kind of father our flesh wants because our flesh thinks far more of itself than it should. It desperately wants to believe that it is good and holy. This is why the Jews were so shocked when Jesus dared to tell them that they were in slavery. They were completely blind to their own unrighteousness. And if you believe yourself to be righteous, free from God's judgment, what need do you have of mercy from God?

Jesus, however, reveals to us a different Father, indeed, the true and only Father. The Father that we see in our Lord Jesus Christ stands in complete opposition to the father of the world and all the religions of works righteousness. The Father of Jesus is merciful and compassionate. The

Father of Jesus gives life rather than taking it. The Father of Jesus pays the debts of His debtors. The Father of Jesus would rather give His only-begotten Son to death rather than see you destroyed. This Father, the true Father, wants you to live even though you have sinned against Him. He desires you to be His child even though by your sin you have spurned Him and instead served the father of lies.

It is this Father, shown to us in Christ Jesus, who this day has adopted these two little ones, Holland and John. Purely out of His grace and mercy He has washed them clean of their sins. They have died to the father of their flesh, the devil. All of his rights have been relinquished because their sins are no longer their own. Christ has laid claim to them all. Their sin and their death belong to Jesus. Satan can make no claim upon them. Not willingly. Not because he no longer desires them. He most certainly does. But because the Father has offered the holy and redeeming Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf and purified their consciences from dead works to serve Him, the true and living God. They have died with Christ and risen with Him from death. The Almighty God has placed His own name upon them making them His own beloved children and promising to be their Father. He will thus, in Christ, bless them with every spiritual blessing. And now they will call upon God using the Name He most loves to be called - Father.

And what did Holly or John do to deserve this heavenly treasure? What did the children who were brought to Jesus do to earn His blessing? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. These little ones have done nothing to merit this adoption. They have been no more pious or righteous. They are not sinless nor are they innocent. No more did they cause themselves to be received into the family of God than they did to be born of their earthly mothers. Both their physical and spiritual lives have been bestowed upon them as a gift. There is absolutely nothing of which they can boast. What could be a greater testament to the love and mercy of God the Father who bestows eternal life precisely upon those who cannot earn it and who cannot lay claim to it by their works? It is only a gift, freely given and freely received.

This is the life and joy of the baptized. We have done nothing. Christ has done everything, just as our heavenly Father wills! In Christ, we see and know the great love of the Father who saves because He loves, not because we deserve it. This is what it means to receive the kingdom of

God as a little child. It means to receive it as pure gift. The merciful works of Christ and the forgiveness He preached reveal the true nature of God. There is no other Father who willed that His beloved Son should take on our flesh and die at the hands of sinners to save sinners. There is no other Father who has laid the sins of the whole world on His innocent Son and condemned Him rather than us. What work could we possibly do in comparison? What of our good works comes even close to the death of God's Son laden with the sins of the world? We are saved, we are forgiven because the Father has freely declared us to be so in Christ. By His Almighty Word the baptized have been declared wholly righteous, justified, redeemed from sin and death.

Beloved, your Father is not a merciless tyrant who requires you first to be a good child before He will accept you. He doesn't want you because you are better or more worthy. That is true of none of us. Only a fool could believe that he deserves a single crumb of bread from God, let alone eternal life. We are all broken. We are all sold into slavery to sin from the moment we are conceived. We all come from a long line of wicked sinners. The Jew's blood lineage from Abraham was irrelevant. It couldn't save them. In reality, they had nothing in common with Abraham other than their DNA. They denied the very God in whom Abraham believed and who counted Abraham's faith as righteousness, the God who provided the lamb in place of Abraham's son. This is the God who provided His own spotless Lamb, born of the Virgin Mary, in your place to die your death and save you from eternal condemnation.

In Baptism, we are brought to the font filthy, guilty, condemned. We come completely unworthy and helpless seeking a gift from God. In the font we die and in the font we are raised to new life. The Old Adam, son of the devil, is drowned and the New Adam, son of the Living God emerges and arises to live before God in the righteousness and purity of Christ forever. The true Father loves to save sinners, to find the lost, to bring into His family those trapped in the devil's so that He might save them and bless them and give them eternal life. Your Father loves to show mercy to you.

Only let us not return to the very death from which we have been rescued. Let us not cast away the inheritance prepared for us by Christ's death and resurrection. Let us set aside the deeds of the flesh and walk in newness of life. Lift up your voice to your Father in thanksgiving and in every time of need. He has promised to hear you and answer you.

The Son, Jesus Christ, has set you free. He has cut the cords of your slavery and freed you from Satan's clutches. By your Baptism, you are sons of God and coheirs with Christ of your Father's kingdom. Let us rejoice this day in the true father, God the Father, our Father made known to us by His Son, our Savior and brother, Jesus Christ.

In the Name of +Jesus.