

Many members. One body united in Christ.

Judica

St. John 8:42-59

22 March, Anno Domini 2026

Redeemed of the Lord,

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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 is the god of every false iteration of the Christian faith. 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. He dangles eternal life before you but robs you of any way of knowing for certain that you will ever have it. 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.

Incredibly, 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

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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. This true Father wants you to be certain of your salvation in Christ and so gives you very concrete proofs of it in the sacraments.

Purely out of His grace and mercy, your heavenly Father has washed you clean of all your sins. You have died to the father of your flesh, the devil. All of his rights have been relinquished because your sins are no longer your own. Christ has laid claim to them all. Your sin and your death belong to Jesus. Satan can make no claim upon you. Not because he no longer desires you. He most certainly does. But because the Father has offered the holy and redeeming Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on your behalf and purified your conscience from dead works to serve Him, the true and living God. You have died with Christ and risen with Him from death. The Almighty God has placed His own name upon you making you His own beloved child and promising to be your Father. He will thus, in Christ, bless you with every spiritual blessing. And now you call upon God using the Name He most loves to be called - Father.

And what did you do to deserve this heavenly treasure? What did the children who were brought to Jesus do to earn His blessing? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. None of the baptized have done anything to merit this adoption. They have been no more pious or righteous than any other sinner. They are not sinless nor are they innocent. No more did we cause ourselves to be received into the family of God than we did to be born of our earthly mothers. Both our physical and spiritual lives have been bestowed upon us as a gift. There is absolutely nothing of which we can boast except God's mercy. 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

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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? 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 co-heirs 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

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brother, Jesus Christ.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.