

* Before making a fresh start, we wish to jog your memory about certain truths. The matter in question is where the human response on God's love is found. As we recall what we recently learned about God's love from John's Gospel, we recollect three truths. First, it appears to us that the Father loves His Son Jesus Christ giving him all things, (Joh 3:35). Second, we come into a strong conviction that if we'll love Jesus Christ, we'll be blessed by the Father, (Joh 14:21). And third, the Father showed us his marvelous goodness in advance by sending His beloved Son as a ransom for all, (Joh 3:16; 1Ti 2:6). Isn't it true, that in return for the reunion with God, our pardoned nature received an inner wish to please God? Yes, it is true that as soon as we were reconciled with the Father through Jesus Christ, our nature adapted eternal life and a wish to please our Redeemer. In contrast to this ideal, the world doesn't respond to God's love in Christ but insists on the power and autonomy of the human nature apart from the Son. That is why the rebellious and unrepentant world is not pardoned but kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction says the Word, (Joh 3:36; 2Pe 3:7).

* I feel that after our ordinary activities this morning, including a part of our Sunday worship, we still have energy to submit our physical and mental resources for the sake of a better life. Therefore, keeping in mind what lies behind, let's reach forward to what lies ahead. And ahead of us there are two lessons from the Bible, they are from Hos 5:15-6:6; and Mat 9:9-13. Here we find the key point within the conclusions of the two texts. The (Hos 6:6) begins with a direct speech. Thus God says, ... *I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.* The same thought was repeated in (Mat 9:13), here, beginning with the imperative connotation Jesus Christ states, *Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'* Please note that in both sayings the spokesman is the Son of God, not a man, which mind and will as usual adjust to changes in the course of his life. Contrary to this, we counted almost 750 years between the two records, and it indicates that God's desire remains the same. Significantly, God's mind and attitude were not changed during the past centuries, even though the history of Israel knows a great number of instances of apostasies and unfaithfulness to God's will. In contrast to people's harshness, God the Father continues to forgive and bless many with a great expectation.

* The axiom *'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'* became an aphorism and is taught as the highest principle when related to justice. Those who really look for a way on how to please God's will, have to follow this pattern. At the same time, God established the system of justice in order to maintain and regulate orders within our society; we also have to follow this pattern. Therefore, how do we need understand it? Let's us to address this question to the Lord in our prayer.

Dear Heavenly Father, we believe that laws and regulations in your kingdom were established under

the guidance of the Holy Spirit with a purpose to maintain order in all aspects of godly life. On the other hand, if taken into consideration Your teaching of mercy, then does it mean that we may surrender the given laws and regulations for the sake of mercy toward wrongdoers? Please, give us the right understanding of these things as we pray, for to You alone belong all glory, worship, and honor, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

* After saying “Amen” we have feeling that now we know how to bring down a problem to the child’s level. In this instance, it is good to start with illustration from the life of David, (1 Samuel 21). Once this story was also used as an illustration by Jesus, but in situation with regard to the sabbatical controversy with the Pharisees, (Mat 12:1-8). In short, the story tells that when David fled from Saul, he occasionally entered into the priestly city Nob. There he met the high priest Ahimelech who knew him as a brave warrior who struck Goliath. During that time David and his companions didn’t eat for several days; therefore, they were pretty hungry and exhausted. David didn’t tell anything about his relations with the troublemaker Saul, and the priest gave him what David asked for, particularly bread and a sword. He gave David five loaves of consecrated bread that was lawful to eat for anyone but priests. At first, Ahimelech interviewed David about his men to determine if they abstained from sex or not. And when he was assured that the men were clean, he gave them bread. In this situation, the priest acted under the occasion of necessity. Yes, he had broken the ceremonial law, (Mat 21:4); but at the same time, he spared David and his men’ from teething troubles.

* Please note, the given story was approved by Jesus and even the Pharisees didn’t argue that the priest acted lawfully. In this case, Ahimelech was thought to be a good man from God’s view. Now it is our turn to go and learn what this means, *‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’* In (1Co 15:34) the apostle Paul mentioned some Christians in Corinth who continued to act against God’s will as they would not have knowledge of God. *I speak this to your shame,* he said. Isn’t it true that some Christians act as judges, without mercy and compassion. The judges might say something like this, *a man broke our constitution! That is a shame!* they might exclaim. However, it is not a shame that someone may break a rule, or overlook a portion of the constitution. But it is a real shame when Christians: first, judge unjustly; and second, show no mercy and compassion to their fellow Christian. Do you remember “The Parable of the Unforgiving Slave” whom a master showed compassion by forgiving the astronomical debt? Contrary to this, the former debtor didn’t show even a little compassion in return. Now try to count a countless number of your transgressions, and think over God’s mercy to you. Significantly, apart the blessing of forgiveness, the Lord promised to bless us for each our act of mercy. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy,” says the Lord.

* Now, keeping in mind God's wish for mercy over sacrifice, we return to our illustration. The story received its further evaluation as soon as King Saul received the report what the high priest had done for David. On that occasion, Saul summoned all the priests of the town Nob to one place and conducted a formal investigation. During the debate, the king overthrew all of the legal defenses, and then he ordered his people to put to death Ahimelech and all his family. Significantly, Saul's guardians were good enough in order to refuse the king's order; only one official named Doeg obeyed Saul. It amazes us, if follow the literal interpretation, that Doeg executed eighty-five priests by himself, then with Saul they put to death all the population of the priestly town including the domestic animals! (1Sam 22:19).

That is the rest of story of violations and executions with no mercy on top!

* The final point of our discussion, we address to the notable remark of Jesus as he said, ... *For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners*, (Mat 9:13b). Here Jesus appears not as a Judge but as the Master of mankind salvation, whose justice is all about the thoughtful consideration: Is a person merciful sinner, or he self-righteous executioner? The similar notion is sounded in (2Pe 3:9). Here the apostle says, *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but he is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*. The fact of our salvation is fully laid upon Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross as a sufficient payment for sins of the entire world. The Son fulfilled the Law in all its points, not like the brave David, or the merciful high priest, or the fear-god king's servants from the illustration, or anyone else. Truly, there is no one on earth is so merciful as Jesus by whom we can be saved. From this we conclude - God the Father loves His Son because of His Son's merciful character; and He gave royal rights to execute justice under the notable principle, we've learned today. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy," Surely the Father blesses His Son, and through him all who follow after his Son's character.

Amen.

Tomorrow we'll celebrate Independence Day. Traditionally this day is set aside not only for entertainments, but it is also the national day of repentance. With this in mind, please join me as I pray. *Dear Heavenly Father: We praise You for freedom under Your Gospel, that You enable us to live the godly life and harm no one; but we often neglect Your statues and commandments; we often hurt other people with prejudgments; we often avoid our privilege to work out the good things for the benefit of others. Dear Lord, forgive your people for their harshness of hearts, and let's us all accept and believe in Your mercy through the forgiveness of our sins for Christ's sake - the rock of our salvation. Here I repent of my sins, and I implore You, be merciful to me, a sinner!*

Amen.