

**SERMON FOR THE SEVENTH  
SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY  
Pastor Bob Stelter, Luke 6:27-38**

A parent told me she sent her little five-year old son to Sunday School. This mom is in the habit of discussing with her son what his teacher said. When he got home, his mother asked, “Was Mrs. Franklin there? What did she tell you today?”

Her son replied, “Mrs. Franklin wasn’t there today.”

Mom asked, “Who was there”

The boy said, “I don’t know her name. She was the substitute.”

The mother asked him, “Do you know anything about her?”

The boy answered, “She’s Jesus’ grandmother.”

“Jesus’ grandmother?” she asked.

“Yep,” the little boy said.

The mom asked, “Now how do you know that?”

Her son said, “He’s all she talked about.”

Let’s talk about sincerity today, sincerity when it comes to putting our faith into action.

I have never seen anyone go to one of the Narcotics Anonymous meetings we host here, who, if they are sincere, does not get up and say, “I’m an addict.” But just think how many of us go to church and never ever say, “I’m a sinner.”

Whenever I hear someone say, “I don’t go to church because churches are full of hypocrites,” I usually say, “Well there’s always room for one more.”

There are better ways to respond when they say churches are full of hypocrites. Instead, I know you will answer “Oh, yes, that is true. Do you have a better suggestion of where we should go? We are struggling with our hypocrisies.

We are seeking to become like Christ. And Christ loves us so much that it does help us be less hypocritical.”

And you could add, “All because of the cross. All because of Jesus’ love. All because he was obedient even unto death, for you and for me. What a Christ we have. What joy he can bring into a heart that is honestly struggling to put the hypocrisies and the inconsistencies aside and follow him as a disciple.”

Because in moments of complete honesty, people are offended by the grace of God. Not when that grace is given to us, mind you. No, that makes us happy. But when God’s grace is shown to the ungrateful and the wicked, to the unbelieving and the indifferent, then we do begrudge God’s generosity.

A certain employer had two supervisors over his employees. One of the supervisors was

pleasant and kind to the workers. The other super was harsh, constantly threatening and pressuring. The kind supervisor reported the other supervisor's mean behavior to the employer. The employer asked him, "What do you want me to do?"

The supervisor said, "Call him in and teach him a lesson."

Well, the employer agreed, called in the cruel supervisor. He confronted him, "I have reports that you have been harsh and threatening to our workers. Is that true?"

The supervisor responded, "Yes, sir, that's true."

The employer said, "Then I must teach you a lesson." The harsh supervisor grew visibly nervous. The employer said, "You are forgiven."

Now, the other supervisor heard what happened and was enraged. He confronted the employer. The

employer asked him, “Why are you upset? You wanted me to teach him a lesson.”

Never be offended by God’s generosity. Grace is meaningless unless we are gracious.

When the fabulously wealthy Aristotle Onassis died, all his super rich friends gathered after the funeral. Naturally the main subject of conversation was how much Onassis had and who got it. One person in the group asked, “How much did he leave?” Another person answered: “How much did he leave? Everything. He left everything.”

Jesus advocates a radical new way of life in our Bible reading today, a way of life that does not simply affirm traditional ethics, but one in which we are called to be merciful in the same way that God is merciful. God is merciful beyond compare and we are called to be the same.

Remember Jesus sends no one away empty, except those full of themselves.

Hear these words of Jesus, embody them: “Be compassionate as your Father in heaven is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it shall be given to you. For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you.”