

Mercy – Zoom Service 28/06/20

Welcome:

Welcome to our Zoom service this morning.

- Its good to meet together again in this way.
- Even with lockdown being eased it is likely we will be continuing Zoom services for some time.
- So, hopefully, these times are helpful
- Enabling us to meet with God
- And to support each other

Let's begin with a prayer

Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus,

Thank you that we can meet with you this morning,

Thank you for your great love and mercy that has opened up a way for us to come into God's presence. To know we are loved and precious to you.

Help us to hear you speak to us this morning. To be strengthened and encouraged so we may live lives filled with hope and joy.

Forgive those times we have not been as kind and forgiving as we should have been. Fill us with your love and use us to do good in this church, in our families, and communities, at work or school wherever we may be.

In your holy name,

Amen

Reading: Jenny H Ephesians 2:1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Worship: Jenny B

Fellowship Prayer:

We used to have a rota for praying each Sunday.

- We stopped this whilst we were limited for time on Zoom services
- Now we are praying to have as long as we need
- So, we have realised we can reinstate a time of prayer into the service

According to the rota

- On the 4th Sunday of the month we pray for the Sunday School and Youth Group
- So, let's be praying for our young people
- For the reopening of school, and pressures of schoolwork
- For their health especially overcoming the effects of isolation on their mental health
- For them maintaining their friendships when separated from their friends.

Let's also pray for those who are still shielding

- As they are not able to enjoy the relaxing of the lockdown with the rest of us.
- Pray for those who are anxious and fearful about the risks of easing lockdown
- For wisdom in our leadership team as we contemplate the reopening of church.

Any other needs?

Prayer.

Sermon: Mercy**Preamble**

This is the second in my mini-series based on Micah 6.

- Last week we talked about justice.
- This week we are thinking about mercy
- And in a few weeks, we will tackle walking humbly with our God

I confess, I wanted to talk about justice last week

- I thought it was relevant and important
- This week I came to think about Mercy
- And realised I had no idea what I should say.
- Why on earth did I come up with this idea of following Micah 6?
- I really should have thought it through

But as I desperately looked up bible passages and looked for inspiration

- I began to realise that justice and mercy are inextricably linked
- Mercy has no meaning without justice
- In the same way that forgiveness has no meaning without sin
- We have to reach an acknowledgement of need or debt
- Before we can appreciate mercy.

So, my passage this morning begins with sin

- Specifically, David's sin with Bathsheba

Reading 1: 2 Samuel 12: 1-13 & Psalm 51

The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

⁴ "Now a traveller came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveller who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ⁹ Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

¹¹ "This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."

In Psalm 51 we read David's response to God.

Reading 2: Psalm 51

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.

⁵ Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

- ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Saviour,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- ¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.
- ¹⁸ May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- ¹⁹ Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Introduction

This morning we are thinking about Mercy

- Mercy is based on compassion for another person
- David had sinned and deserved punishment
- But God, in His mercy, alleviated this punishment

This mercy is based on God's love and compassion

- Not on any merit on David's part.
- As David himself acknowledges
- He asks for God's mercy and forgiveness
- Not because he deserves or needs it
- But according to God's unfailing love and God's compassion (vs. 1).

Just as justice is part of God's character, (as we discussed last week)

- Mercy is also a characteristic of God.
- We read in Micah 7:18
Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.

When God promises to reveal himself to Moses in Exodus 33:19-21

- He tells him
*"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, Jehovah, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."
²¹ Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."*

These are amazing verses

- Moses sees God,
- God reveals His character, His nature, His identity to him
- That's what it means for him to 'declare His name'
- And this is done within the context of mercy and compassion
"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

But God is too holy to see him and live

- So, God tells Moses he will hide him in a cleft of a rock as he passes by
- Thus, Moses is enabled to be in God's presence
- This is a picture for us
- We too are able to come into God's presence
- Hidden in the 'Rock' that is Jesus
- There is an old Hymn that says
- *'Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.'*

Jesus is the ultimate epitome of God's mercy

- We know that
- We receive forgiveness and salvation through his sacrifice.
- But it is not just his death that demonstrates this
- All of Jesus' life, everything he did was an example of mercy
- Right at the start of his ministry we see him acknowledge mercy as an essential part of his work.

We read in Matthew 9: 9-12

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus is possibly quoting from Hosea 6:6

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

- He is saying that offering a sacrifice without a change of heart is meaningless
- Doing all the actions without the love for God is worthless
- Jesus did not come for those that thought they were alright
- He came for those who know they are in need of forgiveness

So, we need to acknowledge our own sin

- Our own inability to live a good life
- Our need of Him
- Then turn, in repentance, to God and ask for His forgiveness and mercy.

God doesn't want us to just be good just for the sake of being good

- He wants to restore his relationship with us.
- He is motivated by compassion and love for us.
- And compassion and love are at the heart of mercy.

What does mercy mean?

This brings us to the question,

- What do we mean by mercy?
- Like justice, we all have an idea of what it means
- But it is quite difficult to define

The theologian Millard Erickson defined it in *Christian Theology*,
"God's mercy is His tender-hearted, loving compassion for His people. It is His tenderness of heart toward the needy. If grace contemplates humans as sinful, guilty and condemned, mercy sees them as miserable and needy."

There are several words translated either mercy or compassion in the bible.

- In the old testament we have
 - *Râcham*: (singular) Comes from the word 'to caress'
 - A gesture of love and affection
 - This is the word God used when showing himself to Moses (Exodus 33:19)
 - *Racham*: (plural) carries the sense of the womb
 - With the idea of being cherished like an unborn child.
 - *Checed*: Means kindness, show favour towards
 - This is the word used by Micah to describe God's character (Micah 7;18)
 - And Gods desire for mercy not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6)
 - *Chanan*: To bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior.
 - This is the word David uses in Psalm 51
 - As he pleads with God for forgiveness

The in the new testament the main words in the Greek are.

- *Oiktirmos*: Suggests compassion or pity.
 - Possibly divine forbearance in forgiveness of our sin.
 - It is used in Romans 12:1
Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.
- *Eleos*. Compassion, sometimes translated tender mercy
 - Used by Jesus in Matt 9:13 in quoting Hosea
 - Saying *"I desire mercy not sacrifice"*
- *Eleeo* – To be compassionate towards take pity on
 - This is found in Mark 10:47
 - It is the word blind Bartimaeus calls out
 - *"Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

We read this in Mark 10:46- 52

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

⁵² "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

This story shows a slightly different aspect of mercy

- Up until now we have concentrated on our moral need of God
- On forgiveness
- But mercy also relates to our physical, emotional, and spiritual need of God
- God sees our weaknesses, our fears, our struggles and wants to help
- To meet all our needs

It is the same love and compassion that causes Jesus to weep over Jerusalem

- Saying
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." (Matthew 23:37)
- We can sense the passion in his words
- The love and the longing

In something called the 'Misericordiae Vultus' Pope Francis has written that

- *"Jesus Christ is the face of God's mercy."*
- He goes on to describe it saying,
- 'Jesus' mercy is not abstract but "visceral" – it's something that quite literally changes us from the inside out.'
- In Matthew 9: 35-38 we read
Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

The Greek word used for compassion is '*splagchnizomai*'

- It literally means 'To have the bowels for'
- That deep yearning that churns up our insides

We should be Merciful

This brings us to the next point

- Because God is merciful
- He requires us to be merciful towards others
- Both in forgiveness and healing

Just as with justice we are called to be merciful for the same three reasons

1. God is by nature merciful
2. Being merciful is the right, or in this case, loving thing to do
3. God has been merciful towards us.

We have already discussed how God is merciful,

- How mercy is part of His character
- It is who He is
- Not in a reluctant or dutiful way - He longs to be merciful!
- He is just looking for any excuse to forgive and comfort.
- He is passionately compassionate

And he calls us to be passionate about mercy as well

- In Zechariah 7:9 we are told
"This is what the LORD Almighty said:
- Mercy is translated from *'cheched'* and compassion from *'racham'*
- So, the verse could be translated
- *'Administer true justice; show kindness and cherish one another''*

He is calling for us to have a deep desire for others

- An unconditional love.
- To cherish all whom God sends to us.
- Imagine if that were the Churches reputation
- A place of mercy and not judgement.

But how on earth can we live up to this?

- It is beyond our ability
- But Jesus tells us where to start in the famous parable of the unforgiving servant
- The servant has a huge debt, way beyond his ability to pay
- His master has pity on him and cancels the debt
- Isn't that amazing

If you've ever been in debt you must know the weight you carry around with you

- The fear and shame
- The helplessness
- But suddenly it has gone, you are free
- You can walk out with your head held high

Elated the servant leaves but on the way sees a fellow servant who owes a few pounds

- He immediately demands the money
- He knows his rights
- But when the master hears of this, he is not best pleased

We read in Matthew 18:32-34

“Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’”

Why was the master upset?

- Several words spring to mind.
- Arrogance, ingratitude, selfishness
- Didn’t he understand his fellow servant’s plight
- A plight he had so recently shared.

The point Jesus is making is we have been shown mercy by God

- Jesus went so far as to die to pay our debt
- Do we grasp that?
- Do we somehow think we deserved it because we are ‘good people’?

If we can grasp the extent of God’s mercy to us

- How could we not be merciful to others?
- In his letter James cautions us to
Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:12-14)

We are told to be merciful because we have received mercy

- But the converse is also true, if we refuse to be merciful,
- That hardness of heart blocks our ability to receive mercy
- It doesn’t change god’s desire to be merciful to us
- But we are unable to receive it.

Conversely if we learn to behave mercifully towards others

- Then the blockage is cleared
- And God’s mercy can flood into our hearts.
- As Jesus preached
“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” (Matt.5:7)

Conclusion

In conclusion I want to focus on two men

- David and Bartimaeus
- One was a king and one was a beggar

- But both were aware of their need for God mercy
- Both knew they were completely dependent on Him.

When David was faced with his sin, he didn't try to make excuses

- To blame someone else or point out worse things that other people had done.
- He honestly acknowledged his sin before God
- And acknowledged only God could make him clean and whole again.

Bartimaeus had very little but recognised Jesus for who he was

- People told him to shut up and remember who he was.
- But he didn't care about who he was
- He was focussed on who Jesus was.
- And nothing and no one would stop him crying out to Him for mercy

Both men found God delights in being merciful

- Both were given what they asked for
- Cleansed, healed, restored.

I guess this is where we should finish

- Like them we need to recognise our need
- Our dependence on God
- Like Bartimaeus we should not let anything put us off or discourage us.
- No excuses or justifications
- Continue to call on Jesus
- He will hear us and stop and bring us to himself
- He will be merciful

Let us likewise be merciful to others

Amen

Worship: Jenny B

Blessing: From Jude 20-24

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

²²Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Doxology

²⁴To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— ²⁵to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.