**TITLE:** MERCY

**TEXT: Ps. 57:1 & 51:2-13; Ro. 5:8; Lk. 18:9-14;**

**Job 5:17 & 9:15 & 42:12-13, 15-17; Joel 2:25-26; Heb. 12:5-6; Lk. 6:36 & 10:30-37; Hosea 6:6; Lk. 18:35-43**

**INTRODUCTION:** This morning, I want to talk about one of the sweetest subjects I know. I want to talk about mercy.

The Heritage Dictionary defines MERCY as:

**Compassionate treatment, especially of those under one's power; clemency. 2. A disposition to be kind and forgiving 4. Alleviation of distress; relief.**

In the book of Psalms, the word mercy is used 28 times and David cries out 7 times within the book of Psalms for the Lord to have mercy upon him personally.

**Psalms 57:1 (NIV)** **1Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge….**

The fact is mercy is one of the primary themes that run throughout the pages of Scripture.

The word mercy is used in over half of the books of the Bible. 38 books of the bible to be exact, but even where the word isn’t specifically used the theme of mercy is still implied…

Compassion, pity, forgiveness, kindness, sympathy, understanding, clemency, leniency are all synonyms of mercy so we find that mercy becomes a central theme that runs all throughout the pages of Scripture..

David cries out for mercy and tells us why that mercy is needed in:

**Psalms 51:2 -13 (NIV) Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.**

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

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

**4Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.**

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

**6Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;**

**you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.**

**7Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;**

**wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.**

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

**9Hide 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.**

**11Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.**

**12Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**

**13Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.**

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

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

The removal of our sins, our very forgiveness by God, is an act of His divine mercy.

The word David uses for Mercy here is:

the Hebrew**=*khaw-nan'***

**to *bend* or stoop in kindness to an inferior; (be) merciful, have mercy (on, upon), have pity upon, make supplication,**

It comes from a root word that means to be tender toward…

It was because David recognized his need for the mercy of God upon his own life that he became a man who was merciful himself.

We see that displayed when time after time, as King Saul was seeking to kill David for no reason other than his joyously of David’s relationship with God, Time after time, when David had the opportunity to kill Saul he wouldn’t do it. He was merciful to Saul..

Or when David takes Saul’s crippled grandson, the heir to Saul’s thrown, into his own house and cares and provides for him for the rest of his life..

Mercy is to beget mercy. Mercy received is to become mercy given..

The Psalms of King David are full of mercy…

Jesus talked about mercy even more then David did.

Probably because Jesus was the embodiment of mercy, Jesus is the personification of the mercy of God..

**Romans 5:8 (NIV) 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Talk about mercy---this is the utmost Mercy, the paramount mercy..

**While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!**

Mercy being defined as: to *bend* or stoop in kindness to an inferior…to be *compassionate* by word or deed, --- have pity on,.

Christ dying for us while we were, yet sinners is the mercy of God displayed. The death of Christ on Calvary’s cross is the manifestation of the mercy of God given to you and me.

Jesus often talked and taught about mercy…

**Luke 18:9 - 14 (NIV) 9To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:****10“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.****11The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.****12I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’**

**13“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’**

Which of these men, do you think, understood mercy?

Which of these men, do you think was able to receive mercy?

Which of these men, do you think would be able to go from that place and live a life of mercy?

And maybe most importantly, which man do you most closely identify yourself with?

If you have even an elementary understanding of the mercy of God and have experienced that mercy in your own life, then you will most probably identify yourself with the second man, the tax collector.

The man who cried out for God to be merciful to him because he recognized himself a sinner…

Jesus goes on to say….

**14“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

What we need to understand about mercy is that Mercy is an attribute of God—a part of Gods character, a part of who God is.

If mercy is a part of who God is then God has to be merciful..

Does that mean that God will never rebuke or correct us?

No! Not at all! Because God is also just. Justice is also an attribute of God, part of who God is, and sometime that justice will demand that we be rebuked and corrected-- but that doesn’t displace His mercy..

God is merciful even in His justice. If He were not we wouldn’t exist! We would have been destroyed in our sin a long time ago..

God said that the just penalty for sinning against an all holy, all righteous God was death. Death of the physical body and the second death, eternal separation from His presence forever in hell..

Scripture has also told us that **“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”.**

We are all sinners so we all deserve death and eternal separation from God in hell. And if God were just, just, then that is what would happen to each of us.

It is only His mercy that spares us that just penalty.

So even though we may be corrected or rebuked by God at times, we will always find His mercy in that rebuke or correction.

That is why Job could say the things that he said while going through such severe adversity in his life.

**Job 5:17 (NIV) 17 “Blessed is the man whom God corrects;  so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.**

Job has just lost his children, his crops, his flocks and is sitting in a pile of ashes covered with painful boils from head to toe when he says these words..

**“Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.**

The only thing that Job could do was to plead for Gods mercy.

**Job 9:15 (NIV) 15 Though I were innocent, I could not answer him;  I could only plead with my Judge for mercy.**

And God was merciful to Job!

**Job 42:12 - 17 (NIV) 12The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. 13And he also had seven sons and three daughters**

**15Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.**

**16After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation.****17And so he died, old and** **full of years.**

That is the mercy of God!

**Joel 2:25-26 (NIV) 25“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten— the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—**

**26You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,**

**and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you;   never again will my people be shamed.**

The apostle Paul echoes the same sediment in:

**Hebrews 12:5 -6 (NIV) “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,**

**6because the Lord disciplines those he loves,**

**and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”**

When an earthly father, who loves their child, disciplines that child when they do wrong, he does it to help train them to not do things that may prove harmful to them--- it is an act of mercy!

So how are we to respond to the mercy of the Lord upon our lives?

Jesus tells us how we are expected to respond to the mercy of God in:

**Luke 6:36 (NIV) 36Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.**

We are to be merciful to others just as our Heavenly Father has been merciful to us..

Church, that is a lot of mercy that we have been called to dispense.

God is always merciful. Even in His rebuke and discipline we see and experience the mercy of God..

His mercies, many times, deliver us, bless us, correct us, guide us, train us and teach us….

I would dare say that in every act of God upon our life, if we look hard enough, we will see His mercy..

And we have been called to be merciful just as He is merciful…

One day when confronted by a religious leader, an expert in the Law of Moses, Jesus illustrates the mercy that we are to be willing to manifest in our lives with a parable ….

**Luke 10:30 -37 (NIV) 30….. Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.****31A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.****32So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.**

**33But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.****34He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.****35The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper.**

**‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’**

**36“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”**

**37The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”**

**God says in: Hosea 6:6 (NIV) 6For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.**

The Priest and the Levite were religious pros.. They took pride in knowing the law and probably never missed a day of Church in their life.

The Samaritan was despised by the Jews.. They were seen as less than second class citizens. Were looked upon with total distain and even contempt by most Jews. A Samaritan was human refuge, garbage in their eyes.

The Priest and the Levite probably had never missed a sacrifice in their life…. The Samaritan most probably had never offered a sacrifice to God…

But the Samaritan was the only one who was commended by God here..

Why? Because he understood mercy. He knew how to be merciful. And his act of mercy was far more acceptable to God then the Priest and Levites countless ritualistic sacrifices and offerings were.

Why? Because God desires mercy more than He does sacrifice.

The fact is mercy is the best sacrifice that we can ever give God.

An ethics professor at Princeton Seminary asked for volunteers for an extra assignment. At two o'clock, fifteen students gathered at Speer Library. There he divided the group of fifteen into three groups of five each.

He gave the first group of five envelopes telling them to proceed immediately across campus to Stewart Hall and that they had fifteen minutes to get there. If they didn't arrive on time it would affect their grade. This he called the "High Hurry" group.

A minute or two later he handed out envelopes to five others. Their instructions were to also go over to Stewart Hall, but they were given forty-five minutes.

After they departed, he gave the last of the envelopes with instructions to the third group, the "Low Hurry" group. They were given three hours to arrive at Stewart Hall.

Now, unknown to any of these students, the teacher had arranged with three students from the Princeton University Drama Department to meet them along the way, acting as people in great need.

In front of Alexander Hall one of the drama students was going around covering his head with his hands and moaning out loud in great pain. As they passed by Miller Chapel on their way to Stewart Hall, they found a fellow who was on the steps lying face down as if unconscious. And finally on the very steps of Stewart Hall the third drama student was acting out an epileptic seizure.

It's interesting that of the first group no one stopped, of the second, two of the five stopped, and of the third group all five stopped.

How often, I wonder, do we get so involved in our “sacrifices” to the Lord, our religious rituals, that we neglect the more important matter of allowing ourselves to be a conduit of His mercy to the world in which we live?

I mean, isn’t that what God has told us that He desires from us?

That He desires mercy over sacrifice and that He wishes that we acknowledge Him by the life that we live rather than our merely offering ourselves to Him a couple hours on Sunday mornings and maybe a couple hours during the week?

**For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,**

**and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.**

Maybe one of the reasons that the Good Samaritan was able to stop and help was because he had a more leisurely agenda, while the religious "pros" of Jesus' day were living in the fast lane and simply had no time for interruptions. Their calendars may well have been filled with commitments that left them no leeway.

Possibly they were so busy trying to look religious that they had no time to put their religion into practice.

Jesus was busy for God! He was God! Yet He always took the time to be merciful wherever and whenever that mercy was needed.

There is a beautiful act and illustration of mercy found in the book of Luke….

**Luke 18:35 - 43 (NIV) 35As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. 37They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”**

**38He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”**

**39Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”**

**40Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 41“What do you want me to do for you?”**

**“Lord, I want to see,” he replied.**

**42Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” 43Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.**

There were those in Jesus procession that didn’t think that they had time to stop and be merciful here.

To be fair, I imagine that they were so focused on the healer from Nazareth coming to town that they blocked out everything else.

We have a dinner to fix, chairs and tables to set up, bulletins to print….have to get the Sound system ready and make sure the choir is in place….

Jesus, you don’t have time to stop and talk to a blind beggar……We have things that need to get done! Church starts at 9:30 sharp.

And besides, he’s blind! He will never know..

Jesus took the time to be merciful.

I ran across another example of mercy that I want to share that I think says, in a pretty dynamic way, just what God expects of us as a Christian….

On the evening of April 25, 1958, a young Korean exchange student, a leader in student Christian affairs at the University of Pennsylvania, left his flat and went to the corner to mail a letter to his parents in Pusan.

Turning from the mailbox he stepped into the path of eleven leather-jacketed teenage boys. Without a word they attacked him, beating him with a blackjack, a lead pipe and with their shoes and fists. Later, when the police found him in the gutter, he was dead.

All Philadelphia cried out for vengeance. The district attorney secured legal authority to try the boys as adults so that those found guilty could be given the death penalty. Then a letter arrived from Korea that made everyone stop and think. It was signed by the parents and by twenty other relatives of the murdered boy. It read in part:

*"Our family has met together and we have decided to petition that the most generous treatment possible within the laws of your government be given to those who have committed this criminal action--.In order to give evidence of our sincere hope contained in this petition, we have decided to save money to start a fund to be used for the religious, educational, vocational, and social guidance of the boys when they are released--.We have dared to express our hope with a spirit received from the gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ who died for our sins."*

This is what God said that He desires from us even more then sacrifice and offerings,

That we have a heart of mercy, that we be as merciful to others as He has been to us…

This Korean family’s eyes had been opened to that mercy…

*“We have dared to express our hope with a spirit received from the gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ who died for our sins."*

Play song I want to see (words on back bullitan)

This morning, Do you want to see? have your eyes been opened to the mercy of God?

Do you take the time to be merciful?

Are you living your life as a conduit, a vehicle, of the mercy of God in your part of the world?

If not, will you, Like the blind beggar that was sitting by the side of the road, cry out to the Lord this morning, Son of David, have mercy on me---For I want to see! I want to see as You see! I want to see my world through Your eyes!

I want to become a vehicle of Your mercy to those around Me! I want to bring others to the mercy of Your love for them……