

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL
THE STORY MERCY TELLS
LUKE 17:11-21

Good Morning

Prayer Needs - Ronald and Nurie Hernandez - San Pablo Taco Chico, Madison, Luise Hughes, Ann H, Preston.

My wife who said good message but if the oil is mercy - it seems the wise in Jesus parable were not merciful to the foolish. Ahh...mmm ok. **What about that?**

So I wrote the author of the article I used in my study last week Brad Jersak - an author, seminary lecturer but I guy I have not just read (a More Christlike God) but met - and his reply I am convinced while he was waiting on the tarmac somewhere in the world was - '*I'd say it's obvious that they didn't. Good insight.*' He then encouraged me to go back and look at the text and remember that it is a 'parable'.

So here are a couple things I want to footnote in looking back at last week:

When we have a question about a parable - **always interpret Jesus by Jesus:**

- Who in Lukes account of the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 6 - after the beatitudes and things like His teaching about loving enemies by saying in verses 36-38
36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."
- So first thing I need to notice is that the parable of Matthew 25 is not an obscure verse that gives a nod to 'spiritual pride'.

But then going back to Matthew 25 here a couple things I notice...**is it possible**

- To receive Mercy - acts of Mercy without surrendering to the light of Mercy in my life? Yes especially if I recognize for Mercy to find its work in my life requires vulnerability and repentance.
- Mercy is not the result of my hustle or entitlement. I see this in full display in the account of the 'thief's' on the cross next to Jesus. One filled with accusation of Jesus not being or doing enough...so what if we look at the word thief and recognize that its another word for 'rebel' - Jesus you did not lead a good enough rebellion. The other thief in vulnerability and weakness simply pleads to be remembered.
- At its core we do not possess **Mercy it holds us** - we can share what holds us.

Lets look at today's text and see what we can learn about Mercy – Luke 17:11-21

Father Chris Alar of Stockbridge, Massachusetts tells a story that really reveals why Mercy is greater than Forgiveness.

The story is about a man who was a Criminal on death row who had no family and most recently discovered he had terminal Cancer. In the story this man was called by the Governor who said 'congratulations' you have been freed, pardoned and forgiven - his sentence had not just been commuted, in the Governors pardon the mans debt to society was removed. Yet the day he left prison was really not that great - he had no family to return home to, no hope of employment because of his criminal record and on top of that he knew he would soon die because of his terminal cancer.

- **He was a forgiven man with not much hope for the future.**

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Now says Father Chris imagine that same man who gets the call from the Governor who says to this man I have given you a formal pardon - you are forgiven of your debt to society and in a short while you will be freed from prison - of course the man is grateful. But then the Governor says I need you to know that as you walk out those doors there will be a limousine waiting for you - inside that limousine is the Doctor who has just discovered the cure to your terminal cancer, now he is going to drive you to my mansion where there I will adopt you as one my children, you will be part of my family forever and I will wipe your criminal slate background clean - you will have no criminal record whatsoever AND you will have a job in my administration for life!

- **THAT is Mercy - even greater than forgiveness!**

No one would argue that the first example was great but it left him with a lot of problems - yet in the second example we actually see Mercy that is greater than just forgiveness. Mercy that forgives, mercy that restores, mercy that makes whole!

Which by the way the Church refers to communion not as the Sacrament of forgiveness but the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Beloved the Mercy of God at work is greater than forgiveness. For many of us we have heard this simple definition of Mercy being that we do not get what we deserved - yet the Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the Mercy of God that is so much more! Mercy that has the power to tell another story!

In our text Jesus is met by 10 men who are living a story of sickness that left them like the man in Father Chris's story with no hope and future. By now these men are no longer even seen as fully human banished from their communities and awaiting their final verdict of death. Jesus reveals Mercy that changes the story - because that's what Mercy is and it is what Mercy does. To those who are convinced life is all but over Jesus reveals the heartbeat of Heaven Mercy.

Limitless mercy that changes everything and tells another story! That beloved is what we celebrate in the Advent season - God's Mercy has a face - His name is Jesus and has come to tell another story among man and that beloved is good news!

The text we are looking at today is a kind of follow up to the message last week - Luke 17:11-22.

- The title that I have given to this message is '**The Story Mercy Tells**'.

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem and interestingly does not take path most folk took. He takes the path road on the border (the Voice translation) between Samaria and Galilee...(considered undesirable territory) He not only is taking a different path but He is putting Himself in proximity to the forgotten. This is road you avoid Jesus - the borderlands occupied by the fringe....the undesirable's - in this case the 'lepers'.

Leprosy for the 1st century Jew was not just a wasting disease it was an indictment of Gods judgment according to Jewish law that prohibited anyone from the community and from worship in the temple that normally meant being exiled from any community.

- Their communities common bond was their suffering exile and survival but never a return to actual life.
- They were by law required to shout 'unclean' to keep anyone from accidentally coming near.

Yet what happens in this text is fascinating

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- First these 10 lepers see this Jewish Rabbi who is not avoiding the 'edges' and they do not cry out 'unclean'
- It is like they recognize something bigger than everyday might be in front of them in this man Jesus.... and they cry out not unclean but 'Mercy!'

Now for every good Jew they have heard it taught

- The very first words used by God Himself to describe Himself was this word the Lord the Lord Gracious, Compassionate - the word in Hebrew is Hessed - referring to the fierce Loyalty of God to His Covenant - His Hessed is His Mercy!
- So the forgotten outcasts see Jesus and don't cry out about themselves 'unclean' they cry out about something they Recognize - 'Mercy'.

Jesus comes to the borderlands and 'recognizes' what everyone else wants to ignore!

- Verse 14 'When He saw them...' oh my goodness Jesus sees them - not leprosy but men suffering. Then often what gets missed is what happens next

Jesus tells them to present themselves to the priests;

- This actually staggering.
- According to the law of Moses any Leper was supposed to go through a ritual cleansing that would take 7 days and then on the 8th day they would go to the Priest with a sacrifice and THEN the Priest would come back and present themselves as 'cleansed' before the Priest

Jesus who do you think you are?

- You just invited these outcasts to bypass the ritual and their offering and present themselves as cleansed **WITHOUT DOING A THING?**
- Its like you are declaring that the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on you to proclaim freedom to captives - **its like you are saying you have power to cleanse what medicine and methods could not.**
- Its like you are saying Mercy the true Hessed of God is NOT limited to rituals and rules but to the lavish abundant lovingkindness of your Father!
- **That is exactly what He is saying!**

Then as they went...one of them...Recognized something happened...

- Maybe because he did not grow up as a his 9 religious friends who trusted that they had to keep a ritual and demand of the law to receive much less keep their healing....
 - Their failure to come back is NOT about ingratitude.
 - Their failure to come back I submit is because they did not Recognize that God could operate outside a Law system...even though the OT is filled with these declarations.
 - I desire a broken and contrite heart - God reckons men and women righteous NOT on the basis of their deeds but on His fierce covenant loyalty.

But these 9? It would appear their confidence was based squarely on the law system.

But the Samaritan - had always been an outsider looking into that system.

- Maybe He Recognized something else is going on....more than something - Some-One with greater authority over incurable sickness – that includes me... that has to be Mercy - that has to be God!

And he turned back...

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- Watch this - here this Leper who has been told you must keep your distance - does the unthinkable he falls at the feet of Jesus.
- No ritual - no rules - no sacrifice - no priest's consecration...he Responds to Mercy with gratitude - he Responds because he conclusion is that God is at work in his life.

Martin Luther once said that **the true nature of worship** is *'the 10th Leper turned back!'*

- He went on to say *'worship...is intended to help us see God at work in our lives and in our world.'*

When we Recognize Mercy beloved its no longer about assessing what we have done or not done it is not about what we think we are entitled its about a heart Response to Love touching our life.

Jesus Response is fascinating.

- This Samaritan has fallen at His feet - because of what He has done for Him and Jesus invitation is not a season of required groveling but an invitation to Rise Up.
- Actually the original word means to **Rise from among the Dead.**

Oh my goodness Jesus is not just inviting him to stand up and look him in the eye – Mercy is telling another story healing Misery and restoring Life!

- His is inviting him to flourishing life. *I have come that they may have life and have it to the full* Mercy is telling another story from the place of being forsaken and forgotten...wait a minute I have bible verses in Isaiah that say that is exactly what God was up to - no longer will you be called forsaken or forgotten - Isaiah 62:4!
- But delighted in and belonging to! That beloved is the Gospel – **Mercy telling another story.**

Did you notice that Jesus invitation to Rise Up was the result of this Lepers Response in gratitude.

- Faith and Gratitude are keys to **actually living in the Mercy of God.**
- Gratitude is more than acknowledgment it is about fellowship heart to heart communion.
"The rhythm of faith and gratitude simple is what being a Christian in the 1st and in the 21st century is about" NT Wright.

As I look at today's text here are a couple thoughts:

- **Jesus the Face of Divine Mercy - you still walk into the borderlands....revealing Mercy that heals Misery!**
- The Face of Divine Mercy is worth gazing upon again and again.
- In my misery and the the misery of the word the cry for Mercy **is a cry for what can heal Misery - Divine Mercy!**
- If I take Jesus words seriously - *be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful...*
 - Never underestimate the enormousness of small kindness's.
 - Be = become, mercy.
 - Remember to be merciful with yourself and others!

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What do we do with this message?

- To **Recognize** the activity of Mercy and Love in my life
- To **Respond** in honest humility gratitude and worship.
- To hear His invitation to **Rise up** into a life that is different - a life of communion with Him.

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Closing Prayer Communion.

Heavenly Father, thank you that you love without exception,
and you desire to bring freedom in all its forms.
Help me accept the freedom you offer,
and be someone who extends that same freedom to others.
May our faith community be a place of welcome and acceptance,
where your good news is shared and celebrated, Amen.

Final Prayer - November 19 - Centering Prayers

Living Christ;

I am drawn to you as your Word and grace opens my heart.
I request to be fed by your love and truth.
I ask to feast with you in the silence.
In these approaching days of gathering with family and friends,
help me exhibit an inner peace and joy.

Where there is stress, let me be the peace.

Where there is anger, let me be the forgiveness.

Where there are patterns of pain, let me become a way toward transformation.

Drawn to you at the center of my being, I surrender to the graceful possibilities you enable.
For this I truly give thanks. Amen.

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