

FAIRVIEW MEMORIAL WINTER BIBLE STUDY
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MERCY

BY

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LESSON: MATT. 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me and he arose and followed him. (10) And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. (11) And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? (12) But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. (13) But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Key Verse: Matt. 9:13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice;

Aim of lesson: To scripturally explore the import, (i.e. the meaning and significance of mercy.)

Context: Jesus used these, or very similar words twice as he responded to the criticism and condemnation of the self righteous Pharisees. Their whole focus seems to have been on keeping the strictness of the Mosaic Law. No Pharisee would have sat and ate and conversed with publicans and sinners.

Jesus rebuked them for their strict and unforgiving application of the law.

Matt. 23:2 The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat: (3) All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, then observe and do; but do not after their works: for they say and do not. (4) For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Matt 12:1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

(2) But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. (3) But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; (4) How he entered into he house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priest? (5) Or have you not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priest in the temple profane the sabbath and are blameless? (6) But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. (7) But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. (8) For the son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

With his words, "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice", Jesus may have been referring them to scripture in Hosea and Micah of the Old Testament.

Hosea 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more then burnt offering.

Micah 6:18 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

In John Chapter 5, Jesus heals a man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem on the sabbath day. This man being healed immediately took up his bed and walked. The Jews told his man, John 5:10 it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. (11) He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.

Jesus himself was confronted by these unbelieving Jews for healing this man on the sabbath. Jesus told these antagonizers that they had not the word of God abiding in them. Jesus said, John 5:39 Search the scripture; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they that testify of me.

Although they were familiar with the words of the scripture they had missed its true purpose and meaning. They had placed the offering of sacrifice above all else, believing that by keeping the requirements of the law that they were justified with God. Is it possible that we have not fully learned what Jesus meant with his words, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice"?

In Matt. 23 Jesus issues a scathing rebuke of the Pharisees and their works.

Matt. 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Jesus called judgement, mercy and faith weightier matters of the law. Although every word of God has weight because it is truth, these matters have greater weight (i.e. importance or significance)

Perhaps if we follow the advice of Jesus and search the scriptures we can understand why mercy is a weightier matter.

Definition of mercy: compassion, loving kindness

Mercy in scripture: Old Testament 208 times, New Testament 68 times, Psalms 100 times. Psalms being a book of praise to God it is appropriate that God's mercy be found so often.

In Gen. 19 we find the words of Lot when God had brought him and his wife and two daughters out of Sodom just before it was destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven.

Gen. 19:19 Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life.

How could we that are saved read those words and not see ourselves. Never has God's mercy been magnified more than in sending his only begotten Son to die on a cross and redeem fallen man from sin and eternal death. That is what mercy looks like. That is the results of mercy.

Romans 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

It reminds us of the song we sing, Justice Called and Mercy Answered.

Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; (2) Wherein in time passed ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God,

who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are save:)

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

These scriptures make it abundantly clear that it was mercy that prevailed to provided a savior for us. Without mercy there would be no savior, no plan of redemption, but as is stated in Heb. 10:37 But a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

It was mercy.

Mercy was the plea of those in the gospels that encountered Jesus with needs that no man could supply.

1. A woman of Canaan whose daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. Matt. 15:22 Have mercy on me, O Lord.
2. A man whose son was a lunatic pleaded for help for his son. Matt. 17:15 Lord, have mercy on my son.
3. Two blind men sitting by the way side as Jesus passed. Matt. 20:20 Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. When rebuked by the multitude present to hold their peace, they cried the more, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.
4. The publican standing afar off that smote upon his breast, his plea was, Luke 18:13 God, be merciful to me a sinner.

How merciful are we? Jesus account of the good Samaritan might help us to see.

Luke 10:30 A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. (31) And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. (32) And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. (33) But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, (34) and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (35) and on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. (36) Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? (37) And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.

Jesus was clearly teaching that he desires us to show mercy and not just receive mercy.

Parable of the unmerciful servant.

Matt. 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. (24) And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. (25) But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. (26) And the servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (27) Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. (28) But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him one hundred pence: And he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. (29) And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (30) And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, til he should pay the debt. (31) so when his fellow servants saw what was done, they

were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. (32) Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; (33) Should not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? (34) And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. (35) So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

Luke 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

How can we that have received mercy in that which is greatest, not have mercy in that which is lesser.

James 2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (13) For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth again judgment.

Woman taken in the act of Adultery.

John 8:3 And the scribes and Pharises brought unto him a woman taken in adultery, and when they had set her in the midst, (4) they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. (5) Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou? (6) This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. (7) So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. (8) And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. (9) And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (10) When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? (11) She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Jesus tempered judgment with mercy. Although Jesus forgave her because of his great mercy, he also ended with, "go, and sin no more".

We are often confronted with difficult situations in the operation of our churches. When church members sin and transgress the Commandments of God the church must address the transgression for the integrity of the church and the honor of God. How to balance the scale between judgment and mercy is not easy. Sometimes people feel that if mercy is shown, they are complicit in others sins. Therefore judgment is administered with harshness. As Jesus demonstrated, I believe judgment should always be tempered with mercy.

Final Thought

Some perhaps equate sympathy and empathy with mercy. According to Websters dictionary:

Sympathy is to have feelings of compassion for someone else's misfortune.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Although it is commendable to have sympathy and empathy toward others, neither affects or changes the situation. When God shows mercy his compassion is always accompanied by action to change the situation.

Mercy is an active thing.