

*Redeemer Presbyterian Church*  
**“Ministries of Mercy- The Call of the Jericho Road”**  
(A study of the book by Timothy J. Keller, P&R Publishing, 1997.)

**Session I.**  
**The Jericho Road**

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*  
*“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*  
*“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”*  
*But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*

Read the account of the “Good Samaritan” in Luke 10. As the account closes, Jesus asks “Which of these three (the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan) was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:25-37)

**The Jericho Road is DANGEROUS**

The road from Jerusalem (elevation 3,000’) to Jericho (1000 feet below sea level) Is dangerous- called the “bloody way” because its mountainous territory provided numerous places for thieves to hide, strike, and escape.

In our modern experience, the Jericho road is much like a dark alley in the wrong part of town. The victim in our story was mugged, beaten, and left for dead.

**The two who walked by...**

A **priest** and a **Levite** came along- and passed by him on the other side of the road.

- *Both of these men were the very officers of God’s people who were charged with helping the needy*
- *Both neglected the principle that to obey is better than sacrifice*
- *Both could possibly have thought the man was dead, and touching him would have excluded them from worship ceremonies for seven days*

Before we are too rough on these men, consider how you might respond to a groaning, bleeding man lying in the road in that dark alley on the wrong side of town.

**The one who showed mercy...**

Enter the **Samaritan**

- This man is a sworn enemy of the Jewish man in the road (the Jews called Jesus a “Samaritan” when they were angry with him- see John 8:48)
- The Samaritan showed compassion in the form of:
  1. Friendship
  2. Advocacy
  3. Emergency medical treatment
  4. Transportation
  5. Financial Help
  6. Follow-up visit

**Ministry of Mercy** (Luke 10:37): Jesus commands us to provide shelter, finances, medical care, and friendship to those who lack them.

**“...The one who showed mercy (the Samaritan) risked his safety, destroyed his schedule, and became dirty and bloody through personal involvement with a needy person of another race and social class. Are we as Christians obeying this command personally? Are we as a church obeying this command corporately?” (Keller, p. 11)**

### **The parable of the Good Samaritan raises a number of issues**

- In telling it, Jesus demonstrates that Jewish leaders who taught the law did not keep it themselves
- **Jesus attacks the complacency of comfortable religious people who protect themselves from the needs of others (Keller, p. 11)**

### **Three Fundamental Issues**

1. The ***necessity of mercy to our very existence as Christians***
  - The parable of the Good Samaritan was an answer to the question “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” In Mark 10:17, when asked the same question by the rich young ruler, Jesus answers “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor” (Mark 10:21)
  - Also see Matt. 25:31- Jesus appears to be judging people on the basis of their ministry to the hungry, naked, homeless, sick, and imprisoned.
2. The ***scope and dimension of the ministry of mercy***
  - The expert in the law did not deny the need for mercy. But he did ask “Who is my neighbor?”
  - In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus shows us that our neighbor is **anyone who is in need- even an enemy.** (Is our honest heart response “Isn’t that a bit unrealistic?”)
3. The ***motive or dynamic of the ministry of mercy***
  - Israel knew the Law, which required mercy to one’s neighbor
  - It is not enough simply to know one’s duty. The priest and the Levite had all the biblical knowledge, knew the ethical principles, and had ethnic affinity with the man in the road. It was not enough.
  - The Samaritan had none of the above, yet he had **compassion.** That was enough.
  - Do we have compassion?? Is the Church merciful??
  - **What will make the church powerful to heal the deep hurts, fill the deep needs, and transform the surrounding society??**

**“Only a small number of people in the history of the world have lived in relatively ‘safe’ conditions. War, injustice, oppression, famine, natural disaster, family breakdown, disease, mental illness, physical disability, racism, crime, class struggle, scarcity of resources- these ‘social problems’ are the results of our alienation from God.”** Perhaps we feel isolated from these forces. But they are all around us. We really do live on the Jericho Road.

## The Jericho Road

### 1. The Growth of Poverty

- **Homelessness** has increased due to a shortage of affordable rental housing and an increase in poverty due to changing labor markets. The ‘new poor’ have lost industrial jobs at the same time that regentrification of inner cities has converted formerly affordable rental housing into more expensive housing for professionals.
- **The Working Poor.** A large segment of those living in poverty in the U.S. fall into this category. In 1996, one out of 5 homeless persons was employed in full or part-time jobs.
- **The Children of Poverty.** Yes, in the United States (in Lynchburg???) The poverty rate for young children is growing quickly in America. 36% of these live in urban areas, 17% in suburban areas, and 27% in rural areas. Many are homeless.

*Homeless children are either desperate for attention, wildly aggressive or totally withdrawn. They will bite and kick and then hug you, or they won't talk at all. Unless kids like this can be reassured the world is safe, they are likely to be criminals by 12. By 14, they may kill.*

*-a pediatrician who tends homeless families*

- **The Youthful Poor.** The divorce revolution is having a profound effect on our society. 21% of anglo children live with one parent, while 33% of Hispanic children and 56% of black children live with one parent. This emerging class of poor families is producing a group of young people who are often subjected to crime and addiction and very little education.
- **The New Ethnics.** Hispanics are quickly becoming America's largest minority. Many have good incomes but the questions surrounding the issue of illegals is bound up with issues of poverty-and how we treat the alien among us.
- **The Blue Collar Poor.** Outsourcing of manufacturing has radically changed the playing field for blue collar workers. From the 1950's through the early 1980's a "blue collar" worker could support a family with a comfortable lifestyle on a manufacturing job. This is no longer the case. What began in the "rustbelt" is spreading across the country.

### 2. Gray America

- **At present, the elderly are doing better than we might expect in another 15 years.** Many have escaped the low income and poor living conditions that have been the lot of the elderly. But there are storm clouds on the horizon. As older people make up an increasingly larger portion of the population, the current systems of care for the elderly will become ineffective.

### 3. *The Sick*

- The AIDS epidemic is not over. The bird flu has not yet hit.

### 4. *The Prisoners*

- Incarceration seldom produces rehabilitation and is very expensive

## Conclusions:

1. **We do indeed live on the Jericho Road.** Mercy ministry has often been perceived as one of many options for the church. Is that the case?
2. **The church of Jesus Christ must squarely face its responsibility for the neighbors lying in the road.** The government is not ultimately equipped for this task. And the church has been called to this task. Francis Schaeffer has called us not to align ourselves with the “left” or the “right” in addressing these issues. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with powers and principalities. This is a spiritual battle. “Neither a simple redistribution of wealth nor simple economic growth and prosperity can mend broken families; nor can they turn low-skilled mothers into engineers or technicians.” (*Keller, p.26*)
3. **Only the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ, and the millions of “minichurches” (Christian homes) throughout the country can attack the roots of social problems.** It is the Word and the Spirit, extending the Kingdom of Christ, which can transform both a neighborhood and a broken heart. *This is the Lord’s challenge to us!!*

Note: All of these study notes are drawn from *Ministries of Mercy- The Call of the Jericho Road*, written by Timothy J. Keller. P&R Publishing, Second edition 1997. This book is available on Amazon.com and also on cvbbs.com (Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service; and excellent online source for books and study materials from a reformed perspective.)