

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 IV.
The Motivation For Mercy

And when he saw him, he took pity on him. (Luke 10:33)

“The only true and enduring motivation for the ministry of mercy is an experience and a grasp of the grace of God in the gospel. If we know we are sinners saved by grace alone, we will be both open and generous to the outcasts and the unlovely.”
(Keller, p. 58)

What is the core motivation for the ministry of mercy?

**What (in our Christian faith) drives us to care for those in need?
(DUTY ???.....GUILT???)**

I. The Gospel of Grace

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?” (Luke 10:25-29)

A. The Legalist

- Self-justification: “..my moral efforts earn God’s favor”
- Jesus demonstrates the insufficiency of the life of the expert in the law with a picture of what God’s law requires
- The parable of the Good Samaritan shows an example of truly selfless love “..so lofty as to be impossible!” *(Keller, p.59)*

B. Jesus’ message for the legalist

- You are spiritually bankrupt- unable to pay your debts
- If you see yourself as poor in this regard, then you are prepared to receive true riches (Matt. 5:3)

“It means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and self-reliance. It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. It is nothing, then, that we can produce; it is nothing that we can do in ourselves. It is just this tremendous awareness of our nothingness as we come face to face with God. That is to be poor in spirit.” (D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*)

C. Jesus' picture of the legalist

- Our "righteous deeds" are like filthy rags
- We are likened to lepers on the street (Isa. 64:6)
- We are all (like the man who was mugged on the road to Jericho) lying in our own blood- helpless!

D. The gospel comes into the picture

- The gospel comes to the bankrupt, spiritually lost, and hopeless
- God impoverished his Son so that his spiritual riches and righteousness could be given to those who believe

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21)

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9)

II. Grace and the Outcasts

"There are two powerful effects that the gospel of grace has on a person who has been touched by it. First, the person who knows that he received mercy while (he was) an undeserving enemy of God will have a heart of love for even (and especially!) the most ungrateful and difficult persons...The second major effect that the gospel of grace has on a person is that it creates spontaneous generosity." (Keller, pp. 61, 62)

A. Love for the outcasts, for the ungrateful and difficult

- The Christian is looking in the mirror ! He sees that he was/is equally needy.
- regarding the "...deserving poor" ... while we want to help the poor move toward self-sufficiency...and we are definitely called to help our Christian brother to a different degree...nevertheless, we need to ask the question "**...was I ever deserving of God's mercy?**"
- Since Christ's mercy was not based on our worthiness, our mercy must not be given to those who reach some standard of worthiness
 1. Luke 6:32-36 **loving our enemies**
 - lend to them
 - do good to them
 - be merciful to them, as our Father is merciful

2. Matthew 18:21-35 Parable of talents

- a king forgave his servant a debt of infinite magnitude
- The servant who had been forgiven failed to forgive a second servant who owed him a small amount of money
- "...shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had mercy on you?" (Matt. 18:33)
- The language of the heart of the moralist: "I worked hard to get where I am, and so can anyone else."
- The language of the heart of the Christian: "I am only where I am by the sheer and unmerited mercy of God. I am completely equal with all other people." (Keller, p. 61)

B. Spontaneous Generosity

"God requires that love cannot be required." (Edmund Clowney)

- Mercy is commanded, but it is motivated by compassion
- Guilt as a motivator: "How can you eat steak and drive an SUV when the rest of the world is starving?" This can lead to a defensive response ("Can I help it if I live in the USA??") and does not produce the kind of response that the Lord is calling us to
- 2 Cor. 8:2-3 Macedonian Christians gave generously to victims of a famine in Jerusalem- even though in Macedonia they were going through trials themselves.
- the ministry of mercy is part of our *sacrifice of praise*
Phil. 4:18
Heb. 13:15-16

III. Incarnational Lifestyle

We are challenged to imitate Christ, who left heaven to become deeply involved in our human condition. Like Christ, we are challenged to look to the interests of others (even our enemies) (Phil. 2:6-7)

The "point" of the parable of the Good Samaritan: **Jesus was humbling us with the mercy God *requires* so we can receive the mercy God *offers*. This is the gospel!!**

"...It is difficult to prove that Jesus was depicting himself in the parable as the Good Samaritan. But this story depicts the pattern of God's mercy, and it is impossible not to see Christ in the pattern. Anyone who has seen himself as the man lying in the road, as the spiritually poor, will then live a life of generosity toward the outcast and the needy." (Keller, p. 66)

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. (available on Amazon.com; also on cvbbs.com (Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service))