

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 VIII.
WORD AND DEED:
A BALANCED TESTIMONY

“Which of these three do you think 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.” (Luke 10:36-37)

“The ministry of mercy is not just a means to the end of evangelism. Word and deed are equally necessary, mutually interdependent and inseparable ministries, each carried out with the single purpose of the spread of the kingdom of God.”

(Keller, p. 106)

In his conversation with the expert on the law, Jesus reverses the lawyer’s original question. The expert in the law had asked “Who is my neighbor?” but Jesus tells a story and asks “Who *was* the neighbor?”

Even a fictional story of mercy is attractive and compelling. Mercy has an impact. It melts hearts and removes objections. Our deeds of love for one another testify to the reality and validity of the Christian faith. (Matt. 5:16, John 13:35)

I. The problem of precedence- and how to achieve balance

- How do word and deed actually relate?? Does one precede the other??
- **Five views on the relationship of word to deed**
 - A. Mercy and social justice is the only legitimate function of world missions
 - B. Social concern is most important but evangelism is part of the mission
 - C. equal importance of word and deed (evangelism and social concern)
 - D. Evangelism is the primary function; mercy ministry is necessary but secondary
 - E. Social concern is not the job of the church in the world. Our job is the ministry of the Word.
(C. Peter Wagner, in *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*)
- Both Word and deed are commands- how do we prioritize them??

1. Mercy: A Means to an End?

- Deed ministry often seen as a way of bringing people to Christ
- Luke 6:35 warns us not to do good expecting a return
- God sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45)
- John 3:17 – the motive for any ministry is love
- If love is our motive, it is unthinkable that we would not want to share the Gospel with someone.

2. **Mercy: An Option, needing to be done in certain circumstances?**
 - “mercy is a good idea but is too expensive for the average church” is not a viable response to God’s mandates
3. **Mercy : “Next on the list”**
 - evangelism is sometimes seen as having a *biblically ordained primacy over mercy- that there is an ordained time sequence of word and deed.*
 - There is no set pattern in Jesus’ ministry. Word and deed are both *imperatives and the motive of both is love.*

II. Mercy and evangelism/word and deed: inseparable ministries which are interdependent

- although these are united and inseparable, we must not confuse word and deed.
- The World Council of Churches Bangkok statement on evangelism (1973) held that social concern *is* evangelism
- Isaiah 1:13-17 Mercy and justice part of the faithfulness required as a demonstration of true religion
- “Biblically the ministry of word and deed are distinct, but never separate.” (Keller, p.111)

We must reconcile people to God, counsel them to emotional wholeness, free them from structures of injustice, and meet physical needs. But we participate in these ministries all in conjunction with each other. We proclaim the gospel of the kingdom through word and deed. (Keller, p. 112)

- the preaching of the Word produces faith (**Rom. 10:16-18**)
- faith always produces good works in general and deeds of mercy in particular (**James 2:1-23**)
- deeds of mercy have an impact; God often uses them as a means to open hearts to the Gospel (**Acts 4:32-33; John 13:35; I John 3:17-18**)

III. Word ministry- though it does not properly function apart from deed ministry- addresses the most radical and foundational roots of human need.

- **Romans 8:1-2; Rom. 10:8-13**

Conclusion: Mercy and evangelism are like smoke and fire. Where one is, the other must be near.

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 , the Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service)

Mark **August 20** on your calendars. Two deacons from Covenant PCA (Harrisonburg) will be with us to reflect on their experiences in mercy ministry.