

The Mercy of Jesus Luke 18:35-43

Abraham Lincoln once said “I have always found mercy bears much richer fruits than strict justice.”

Billy Graham is noted as saying “God’s mercy and grace give me hope – for myself and for the world.”

Theologian Albert Barnes stated that “Nowhere do we imitate God than in showing mercy...What a world this would be if God sat on a throne of justice only, and if no mercy were ever to be shown to men.”

Chuck Colson remarked, “Our presence in a place of need is more powerful than a thousand sermons.”

Augustine wrote that “God leads us to eternal life not by our merit but according to His mercy.”

Puritan pastor, Thomas Watson, concluded that “God’s mercy can drown great sins, as the sea covers great rocks.”

Puritan pastor, Stephen Charnock said that “without faith we are not fit to desire mercy.”

And Jerry Bridges writes “Remembrance of past mercies is a great stimulus to present faith.”

If you hadn’t guessed our topic today is on mercy. As we continue this series on the characteristics of Jesus, we turn to one of a number of passages in which Jesus displayed that trait for the benefit of others.

Luke 18:35-43

Let’s begin our study with the case for mercy.

I. THE CASE FOR MERCY

Let’s first understand what we mean by mercy. We’ll briefly note the difference between mercy and grace, which are closely related but do mean different things.

A. The Meaning of Mercy

Let me begin here by saying that mercy, pity, and compassion are roughly synonymous. The

dictionary defines mercy as “the compassionate treatment of those in distress, especially when it is within one’s power to punish or harm them.”

Unger’s Bible Dictionary says that “mercy is a form of love determined by the state or condition of its objects. Their state is one of suffering and need, while they may be unworthy or ill-deserving. Mercy is at once the disposition of love respecting such, and the kindly ministry of love for their relief.”

Vine’s Bible dictionary calls mercy an “outward expression of pity, assuming need on the part of the one receiving it and the resources adequate to meet the need on the part of the one who shows it.”

Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest says “Mercy relates to the misery of men because of sin” and adds a definition from Cremer who writes that “Mercy is the divine behavior towards our wretchedness because of sin.”

Wayne Grudem in his book on Systematic Theology concludes that “God’s mercy is His goodness toward those in misery and need.”

We learned in Bible college to differentiate between God’s mercy and grace by remembering that mercy is God not giving us what we deserve, while grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve. Like compassion, that we looked at a few weeks ago, mercy not only is an attitude toward someone who has a desperate and immediate need, it also includes an action whereby the person showing mercy has the means to help. We aren’t entitled to mercy. It is given out of the merciful goodness of the one who has every right to punish.

Vance Havner once remarked that if it weren’t for God’s mercy every church would need a morgue in the basement because we all at one time or another have acted like Ananias and Sapphira. The soul that sins will die.

Mercy then is the kindness and compassion God shows us every day in His not giving us what our sin deserves. The withholding of His punishment is the expression of His mercy. Coupled then with His mercy is patience. We see that in **II Peter 3:9** that

God patiently waits for people to be saved, people who deserve punishment, but He isn't willing for them to perish so He waits.

While grace also exhibits His kindness and compassion the same as His mercy, grace is the bestowment of His gift or favor.

Mercy withholds.

Grace bestows.

If you get pulled over for speeding and the officer chooses not to give you a ticket, that's mercy.

If you make a blunder at work and the boss withholds disciplining you, that's mercy. If he turns around and gives you a raise, that's grace.

That is the meaning of mercy. **What then is the measure of mercy?**

B. The Measure of Mercy

God's mercy is evident throughout Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. What is evident when we see His mercy is that forgiveness is an essential part of mercy. Notice in this psalm the blending of mercy and forgiveness.

Psalm 51:1-12

Notice that David correlates God's mercy with His unfailing love and compassion as He repents of His sin asking God to blot out his transgressions believing, trusting that God is forgiving.

In **Psalm 103:11-12** David insinuates the mercy of God and the extent of His forgiveness **"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."**

We deserve God's judgment for sin, yet God in His great love and compassion because of His mercy withholds it. It's clear what would have happened in the garden of Eden had God not been merciful. He would have been just in His punishment for their disobedience, but He demonstrated His mercy when He offered them the promise of a redeemer and Messiah.

Thomas Aquinas once said **"Mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution; justice without mercy is cruelty."**

David experienced the mercy of God through forgiveness realizing he deserved God's punishment but pled for God's mercy base on God's unfailing love and great compassion.

Lamentations 3:19-24 is one of my favorite passages. Jeremiah requests the same from God as David did.

Can you identify with these two men? Body, mind, and soul vexed with the oppression and weight of sin and despair, yet crying out for God's mercies. Jeremiah well understood that God's great love means we are not consumed. Synonyms paint a grim picture of what being consumed means: broken, demolished, devastated, lost, ravaged, ruined, shattered, smashed, wrecked, abolished, annihilated, blasted, eradicated, incinerated, obliterated, wiped-out. Apart from God's great love which extends itself in mercy, it's a state of hopelessness and helplessness. Jeremiah tells us that God's compassion never fails because it is new every morning. As part of His character, His mercy never falters or fails. Because He is unchanging, His mercies will never change. Why? Because His faithfulness is great. Mercy is unlimited.

Let me give you two more passages that speak of the mercy of God coupled with His forgiveness.

Isaiah 55:7 "Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on them, and to our God, for He will FREELY pardon." (emphasis added)

Romans 11:30-31 "Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you."

God demonstrates mercy to all in the sense that no one is immediately punished for sin in which He

would be justified for meting out punishment for disobeying His law because all have sinned. We all deserve His justice, but as we noted earlier, His justice without mercy is cruelty, so He extends to us His mercy, again with the idea that He desires all to come to repentance. But more specifically, His mercy is extended to those who repent so that in the end they are not given what they deserve but instead receive what they don't deserve. God renews His mercy every day because of His great faithfulness. Mercy forgives the sinner when punishment is rightly deserved. **James 2:13** nicely sums it up by saying that **"mercy triumphs over judgment."**

That is the measure of His mercy which brings us to the means of mercy.

C. The Means of Mercy

Luke 6:36 says that we are to be merciful to others just as God is merciful to us. It is only through His divine enablement that we are able to show true mercy to others. We cannot give to others what we have not experienced ourselves. But sometimes we choose to ignore the mercy we have been shown and seek to inflict punishment on others for what they have done to us.

Jesus tells a story in **Matthew 18:21-35** about a man who owed a tremendous amount of money to his master. He fell before the master and begged for more time to pay the debt. Jesus said the master had pity (mercy) on the slave and went beyond giving him more time. He not only showed mercy by not throwing the slave in prison, he also forgave the debt. The story shows the correlation between mercy and forgiveness. The master had every right to punish the slave, but chose instead to show mercy and forgive what was owed. But after the slave left, he ran into a fellow slave who owed him just a few dollars. Forgetting the mercy he was just shown, he was unwilling to show the same in return.

Because it is divinely bestowed upon us, it can only be given through divine means by us. Without this divine bestowment in us, it is all too easy to become resentful, bitter, angry, filled with wrath, malice, and revenge. We would rather see justice meted out

to those who have harmed us in some way, than to be like Stephen who called on God to forgive the very ones who were stoning him. That's mercy – God withheld what they deserved.

When we truly grasp the magnitude of the great mercy shown to us, we should be more willing to demonstrate the same mercy to others. Such mercy can only come from God.

We need mercy. Without it we would be consumed. That is the case for mercy. We turn now to our passage in **Luke 18** and consider the cry for mercy.

II. THE CRY FOR MERCY – vv. 35-39

We begin by noting that the man's problem is clear.

A. The Man's Problem Is Clear – vv. 35-37

Jesus and His disciples are on their way to Jerusalem. This would be His last journey through that area as He is headed to Jerusalem for Passover, and to the cross. The road took them through Jericho. Some critics compare the accounts of Matthew and Mark which says there were two blind men on the road and that Jesus was leaving Jericho where Luke says there was only one blind man He met as He was approaching Jericho, claiming then that Scripture is filled with error. Scholars refute these critics by saying first that there were actually two Jericho's. You may recall in the Old Testament when Israel entered the promised land the first city they encountered was Jericho. After seven days of marching around the city, God caused the city to collapse. It lay in ruins. During the reign of King Ahab, Hiel rebuilt Jericho. The most likely explanation is that it wasn't on the site of the original city but just a short distance from it.

So when it says in Matthew and Mark that Jesus was leaving Jericho and in Luke that He was approaching Jericho, it most likely means that He was passing by the old ruins as He came to the rebuilt city.

And just because Luke only focuses on one of the blind men doesn't prove an error as critics claim or that there weren't two blind men. Luke looks at one

man to showcase the mercy of Jesus.

Luke shows that the problem is clear. A blind man was sitting on the side of the road begging. He is not only disabled by his lack of sight, he is also destitute. He has no means of making a living except to beg for his daily needs. Whether by birth, injury or disease, blindness was not uncommon in Jesus's day. They were despised and reduced to begging. Blindness was considered to be a judgment by God for some sin as was the case in **John 9** when the disciples asked Jesus what sin led to the man being born blind.

As this man sat begging, he heard a commotion and asked someone what was going on. They told Him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

Our problem is clear as well. We are born blind – spiritually blind. We are spiritually disabled and destitute, looking for any handout that might help us with our problem. But all we receive are crumbs. Nothing that can meet our spiritual need.

The man's problem is clear, and his petition is compelling.

B. The Man's Petition Is Compelling – v. 38

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth walking by, he called out **“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”**

It's the same name the crowd will use when Jesus enters Jerusalem. This isn't just a reference to his ancestry. It is an admission of kingship, an acknowledgment of His Messiahship, the one whom the Old Testament prophets foretold would come. The difference between the crowd who would call Him **“Son of David”** and this man is one of faith.

This man knew that Jesus could heal. He may not have seen it with his eyes, but he had heard the news that Jesus could perform miracles but like the man at the pool of Bethesda who couldn't get into the water when it was stirred by an angel, this man had no one to help him find Jesus. He didn't have four friends who would carry him to where Jesus was at so he sat there day after day in his misery

begging for whatever someone might give him.

Let me ask you a rhetorical question. **If you were in desperate need and heard that the person who could help you was walking by, would you remain quiet?**

I think we all know the answer to that. Of course, we wouldn't. We would call out for help. Yet there are those who know that they need Jesus, who is the only one who can be the answer to their problem, but they choose to remain silent, they choose to ignore, they choose to stay where they are.

Now **verse 39** is disturbing to me. In the first part of the verse, we see the man's prevention is concerning.

C. The Man's Prevention Is Concerning – v. 39a

Here is a guy in obvious need. He's blind. He's begging. He has a need for someone to lead him around. He must depend on other people. You would think that the crowd would be all excited for the guy, help him up and take him to Jesus where he could get the kind of miraculous help only Jesus could give. But no. Their response is to tell the guy to pipe down, to be quiet and not interrupt Jesus. Their reaction to the man's plea really tells me that they thought the man was not worthy of Jesus's time or sympathy.

Why did the crowd rebuke him, especially after they had just told him that Jesus was there?

It tells me that the crowd didn't have empathy for the man's problem and didn't really care about his need. A lack of empathy shows a lack of humility. It tells me that the crowd thought they were more deserving of Jesus's time and attention than that of the blind man. It tells me they were indifferent. It tells me they had no mercy.

I wonder how many times I have turned people down or turned away from someone who needed mercy but I refused to give it. **Has there been any occasion where I have told someone who was spiritually blind to be quiet by my words or actions?** God have mercy on me for my negligence and indifference.

Lest we become too smug in my own self-righteous

importance or estimation of our selves and not see our own problem, look back to **verses 9-14**.

This self-absorbed Pharisee was unwilling to see his own sin problem and assumed that his righteous behavior was pleasing to God. He saw no need for mercy. He even looked down on the other man with contempt, unwilling to help the man by pointing him to the only one who could help him in his misery. Maybe the Pharisee even laughed at the thought that the man would even dare cry out for mercy. He may have even thought that it was ridiculous to even fathom that this sinner deserved God's mercy. But the sinner didn't care what the Pharisee thought. He sought mercy from the only one who could give it, the only one who would give it. He pled with God.

So here is this blind man, told to be quiet, but who wouldn't take no for an answer. His problem was great, but he knew the power of Jesus was greater. He knew who could help him. Where the man's prevention is compelling, his plea is courageous.

D. The Man's Plea Is Courageous – v. 39b

Some people might just say, well okay, maybe He doesn't care, maybe He doesn't have time, maybe everything I heard about Him isn't true. But the blind man didn't heed their complaints about his petition to Jesus. He cried out all the louder. He had a problem and there was only person who could resolve it, the man who was walking by that day. He knew he could find mercy from Jesus. It was a courageous plea because he did it despite the disapproval of the crowd.

When we need God's mercy and we call out to Him, do we choose to listen to the crowd and stifle our plea or do we call out all the louder for His help in our time of need? Do we shrug our shoulders when the crowd tells us we have no business going to the Lord, that He doesn't want to be bothered, or isn't interested in helping us or is too busy to notice us?

The blind man went to the one who would show mercy.

There is a song by Casting Crowns who sing:
**Jesus can you show me Just how far the east is from the west,
 Cause I can't bear to see the man I've been rising up in me again.
 In the arms of Your mercy I find rest
 Cause you know just how far the east is from the west – From one scarred hand to the other.**

When your cry for mercy is genuine, Jesus will give you rest.

If you are spiritually blind and desperate, unable to do anything with your sin problem, call out to Jesus for His mercy. When you cry out for His mercy His compassions will not fail because every morning they are new due to His great faithfulness. Where our problem of sin is great, His love and mercy and compassion are great. When we call out to Him in faith, we have the promise that we won't be consumed. And what we see in **verses 40-42** is the compassion from mercy.

III. THE COMPASSION FROM MERCY – vv. 40-42

I hope it's clear to you that Jesus hears our genuine pleas for mercy. When the man acknowledged who Jesus was, he pled for mercy. By faith he understood who Jesus was. **How did Jesus respond?** We see first the attitude of Jesus's mercy.

A. The Attitude of Jesus's Mercy – vv. 40-41

Notice what it says. **“Jesus stopped.”**
 Noodle that for a moment.

Psalm 34:6 “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him; and delivered him from all his trouble.”

In **Hebrews 4:16** we are invited to come to Him for His mercy. **“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”**

In **Matthew 11:28-29** Jesus invites those who are **“burdened and heavy laden to come to Him where they can find or experience rest through**

Him.” It is a personal invitation to receive mercy, to get rest and peace from the burden we are carrying. The only way we get this rest is for Him to carry our burden for us. That is His mercy toward us. He carried our burden of sin to the cross and took our punishment. His mercy withheld the punishment we deserved.

Jesus stopped what He was doing to ask the man what he needed. He wanted to see. Just as the Lord heard the blind man calling so the Lord hears our call for mercy. We see not only Jesus’s attitude of mercy, we also see His action of mercy.

B. The Action Of Jesus’s Mercy – v. 42

Jesus’ attitude led to an action where He healed the man of his blindness, that his faith had healed him. Where his cry brought no sympathy from the crowd, Jesus showed mercy. We see that Jesus heals with a word. We see that the healing was instantaneous. We see that the healing was complete.

The KJV clearly shows us that the man didn’t just receive physical healing, but spiritual healing as well. **“Jesus said to him. ‘Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.’”** In the Greek Jesus doesn’t use the word for heal, but the word for salvation.

When you read in the gospels where Jesus healed people, faith wasn’t required for healing, but faith is always required for salvation. **“For by grace are you saved through faith.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)**
“For the just shall live by faith.” (Habakkuk 2:4)

Jesus brought light to the man’s spiritual blindness and his faith saved him. Faith makes those who were once blind so that now we can see.

J. Vernon McGee says that **“multitudes today have 20-20 vision but have not yet seen Jesus’s death on the cross related to their lives and need of forgiveness for sin.”**

It is only in the power of Jesus that the spiritually blind can be saved.

In these verses we see the compassion from mercy. Let me close with a final thought from **verse 43**. In this verse we see the celebration of mercy.

IV. THE CELEBRATION OF MERCY – v. 43

First, the man’s action is real.

A. The Man’s Action Is Real – v. 43a

After immediately receiving his sight he began to follow Jesus. When we experience the mercy of Christ, we should have the same reaction. He has done a wonderful thing for us in showing mercy, can we do no less than follow Him? Allegiance, commitment, devotion, obedience.

The second thing we see in the man’s attitude is rejoicing.

B. The Man’s Attitude Is Rejoicing – v. 43b

A song by Andrae Crouch is appropriate.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless his holy name!

He has done great things,
He has done great things,
He has done great things,
Bless His holy name!

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Praise is fitting when we have experienced the mercy of Christ. **How can we have any other response?**

And the crowd that showed him no sympathy couldn’t deny that something great had happened and they too gave their praise. **Is that our reaction when we witness the evidence of His mercy on others? Do we give God praise for the mercy He has shown us? We should. Are we like the one leper who came back after being healed by Jesus to give thanks or are we more like the other nine who did not give thanks?**

Someone has rightly said that **“God’s mercy is bigger than any mistake that you’ve ever made.”**

Psalm 86:15 “But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy and faithfulness.”

Tony Evans asks this thought provoking question: “How desperate are you for Jesus to intervene in your circumstances.” If you are, cry out to Him right now. He will stop and hear your plea. When He stops and shows His mercy, we must stop and give Him praise. He deserves it. When we follow the Lord, His mercy follows us forever (**Ps. 23:6**)