

The 2nd Sunday after Pentecost
“Mercy! – Vastly given and desired by God!” (Matthew 9:13)
June 11, 2023
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 2nd Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 9:13.

“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

Here ends our text.

Last week on Trinity Sunday, we heard in our Gospel reading the command of our Lord Jesus to His disciples, you and me, to **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”** Amen.
(Matthew 28:19-20)

It’s called the Great Commission. That every believer in Jesus is sent in this command is easily understood because Jesus’ sends His disciples to all nations and promises to be with them to the end of the age. Jesus sends us to our nation in our time with the means to make people His disciples – His precious Word and Sacraments!

One cannot go and do Jesus’ command unless one is of course first made His disciple by receiving His complete forgiveness, His merciful healing of the soul. For Jesus is the great Physician of the soul as today’s Gospel reading most clearly shows us in the calling of the Apostle Matthew.

Matthew was a tax collector, whose profession was despised by the Jews. Matthew was despised because he collected taxes for Rome. He was considered a political traitor to his fellow Jews by serving occupying Rome. And tax collectors were grouped together with other well-known sinners because they were known to take extra tax dollars for themselves, skim off the top, and there was nothing anyone could do about it.

But this publican is who Jesus commanded to follow Him and be one of His 12 apostles. Jesus was doing much teaching by the sea and His fame was spreading so that many heard and came to Him and were healed. Matthew heard Jesus' direct command to him. **"Follow Me"**. And with the command came the gift of forgiveness and healing of Matthew's soul. So that, he left all as we know from the parallel account in Luke 5 and followed Jesus.

Matthew received great mercy from Jesus. So great was the love that he had received from Jesus that Matthew threw a great party...not a little feast as Luke 5 says, but a great feast. And because Matthew knew of Jesus' great mercy, all fellow tax collectors and known sinners were also welcome at his feast. For Jesus great mercy is for all people. As soon as Matthew was given great mercy, he showed it to others! So great was the mercy that Matthew experienced that as he wrote in the next chapter after our Gospel reading, in Matthew 10, the list of the apostles, Matthew makes sure everyone knows who he was before he had received such great mercy. Matthew lists his name and then adds, "the tax collector".

Jesus Himself said in our Gospel reading that He came "to call not the righteous, but the sinners to repentance". Those who see their great need of the mercy are given great healing of the soul with Jesus' forgiveness. For those who are well, that is, those who think they are well, but really have a fatal sickness within, don't see the need of a physician. The Pharisees who were following Jesus around did not see their soul's sickness – the sin that only Jesus could forgive. Matthew did and so was healed.

So, we acknowledged our soul's sickness at the beginning of the service with the confession of our sins. We confessed to God all our sins and iniquities that justly deserve God's temporal and eternal punishment. And then the Great Physician Jesus heals us again and again as we hear the absolution spoken by one of God's called ministers as from Jesus Himself, or when we privately absolve one another for the offenses that we commit to one another. What great mercy we daily need. And what great mercy Jesus lovingly gives to us! For we not only hear His absolution in His Word but He invites us to His table and gives to us His very body and blood to eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins.

That we receive the Lord's Supper often is what Jesus commanded because our soul is sickened by our sins that we commit throughout the week and given the

medicine of His forgiveness at His feast! What great mercy is found at the Lord's Supper!

That Jesus can forgive sins was rejected by the Pharisees. Right before Jesus calls Matthew he heals a paralytic. You remember the story because the friends who showed mercy to their paralytic friend couldn't reach Jesus. So they cut a hole in the roof and lowered him down. But before Jesus heals his body, what does Jesus do?

“When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”

This Man blasphemes said the Pharisees. But to show that Jesus has the power to forgive sin, He then commands the paralytic to get up and walk. And he does! Which is easier? To say words of mercy, “your sins are forgiven you” or do a miracle of mercy? Most would say that saying is easier. How does Jesus answer? **“6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”**

Jesus, true God and true Man, has the power to do both because He did the harder thing. He died on the cross to forgive all men their sin! He bore the wrath of His Father for all our sins and the sins of all mankind!

Our opening hymn *553 O Christ, Our Hope, Our Hearts' Desire*, in verse two says these words so clearly.

*2 How vast Your mercy to accept The burden of our sin
And bow Your head in cruel death To make us clean within.*

How vast Your mercy! We cannot begin to fathom what great mercy makes us clean within our souls!

Jesus' mercy is vastly given and vastly desired from us! Jesus doesn't require something that He doesn't first give. So when Jesus says in our text,

“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

He first gives what He desires of us! He gives us His righteousness that we out of love would show mercy to others!

And that was the Pharisees main problem and ours also because our sinful nature still resides in us – the difficulty of showing mercy to others. For the Pharisees thought they were better than others. Why would Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners? We certainly wouldn't stoop to their level and associate with them! We're so much more righteous. And that thinking comes from a sick soul who doesn't see the great need of Christ's mercy in one's own soul!

Do you experience this sickness of looking down on others because other's sins are so "great" compared to yours? How quickly we must repentant of Pharisaical self-righteousness and take the log our eyes to invite others to the feast of Jesus mercy!

"Go and learn what this means" Jesus commanded. And it is a lifelong learning process for each of us to know the mercy that Jesus desires us to give.

So is our prayer, verse 4 of our opening hymn.

*4 O let Your mighty love prevail To purge us of our pride
That we may stand before Your throne By mercy purified.*

Yes, Jesus continued to give the Pharisees opportunities to learn of His mercy. After Matthew's calling, Jesus was invited to the house of a Pharisee named Simon for a feast. We hear this story in Luke 7. Jesus did not turn down the invitation for He loves all people.

What happened? A woman, a known sinner entered the home and began weeping at the feet of Jesus. Her tears washed His feet and her hair dried His feet. And she brought an expensive perfume to anoint His feet. What indignity Jesus was allowing thought the Pharisee! Yet, what was Jesus say? First a quick story.

"41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

The woman was forgiven much and so she loved much. The pharisee on the other hand, though he also could not pay his great debt of sin, was forgiven freely. Yet, he did not love because he did not receive Jesus' forgiveness. He still thought he was righteous and in no need of the Physician! Jesus' answer?

“I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”

Jesus turned to Simon and said, **“Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.”**

We have been forgiven much by our Great Physician Jesus. His righteousness covers our sins in our baptism and we receive the washing of all our sins. This is so much more than just a common courtesy! It is an act of Supreme vast love and mercy! It is how Jesus commands to make disciples. And this mercy Jesus desires from each of us. What He has first shown us He graciously leads us to do by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So as God said through His prophet Micah in chapter 6, He repeats to us.

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”

Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)