

“Give thanks to the Lord for the Lord is good;
God’s mercy endures forever.” AMEN!

Mm, let that sink in a moment...

“God’s mercy endures forever.”

Mercy is defined as compassion for another
who is in distress and
wanting to do something about it.

Mercy is a movement inside of us to become
the doers that brings about
the help someone needs. (Pause)

There’s a popular video online,
presumably it’s a security camera,
that shows a young child sort of creep up
to the iPads that a store has on display.

Since it’s a security camera you think
the child might be up to no good as they
pick up the computer and crawl
under the counter with it.

The camera continues to record them as they
take a textbook out of their backpack and
the watcher notices that they are not up

to malice at all,
they simply need the device to
do a homework assignment.

Just as we realize this on the video,
up walks the store manager.

He calls the child out from under the counter,
takes the iPad away from them, and it looks

like he's about to scold them and
escort the child out of the store, but
instead he grabs a nearby stool so
the child can sit at the counter
while working to finish the homework.

The manager sets an example of mercy.

Being aware of the gift of a place and
sharing it with others; having a movement
inside us to become the one that helps.

(Pause)

The high priest in the account from
the Book of Acts showed little mercy.

The Sadducees judged the apostles while
the high priest questioned them.

The apostles' defense was that they
“must obey God rather than human authorities.”

The charge against the apostles was made
because they were healing people in
the name of Jesus,

They were sharing their wealth with those
who had less, and they were teaching that,
though Jesus was killed by being hanged
on a tree,

God raised him up as Savior
for the forgiveness of sins.

The religious authorities hated this.

Verse 33 of the Acts text from chapter 5 says,
“When they heard this they were enraged
and wanted to kill the apostles.”

It's an example of how one person
(or many people) can lack mercy and show,
instead, what ultimate power can do.

Ultimate power can cause people to be enraged
when they see others live the Jesus way;
it's like they lose their mind and go mad.

The problem though is that the jails
were not able to keep the apostles locked up,
and their civil disobedience continued as
they sang hymns in their cells and
spoke to guards about
the gospel of Jesus. (Pause)

It's unfortunately ironic that Christian nationalism
and the 47th president are playing the part of
the Sadducees and the Roman Imperial
elite these days.

Christian nationalist are enraged with people
who teach/preach Jesus.

Many faithful Christians are being tricked into
believing that Jesus' way of caring
and compassion are forms of weakness
and no longer are effective.

There is not a stitch of gospel news when
there is no mercy in word or action. (Pause)

So what do we do when we are forced to live
under laws that are unjust?

Do we grit our teeth and obey what some call
"the law of the land" or should we take on

what can be called life threatening
(or freedom threatening) risks
and break the law that is unjust?

Civil disobedience is the non-violent refusal
to obey laws the protestor believes to be unjust.

Rosa Parks did it when she refused to give up
her seat to a white man when the bus filled up
with passengers.

Pacifist David Miller did it when he burned
his draft card publicly in opposition to
the Vietnam War.

He spent 2 years in prison for that.

Students have engaged in civil disobedience
when they walked out of classrooms
to demand action on climate change
or pitched tents on university campuses
to point out military atrocities
forced upon citizens.

Parents of transgender children are doing it
when they continue gender affirming care
for their child.

These non-violent actions can get one handcuffed,
spat upon (or worse) and/or incarcerated.

These days if you're in the US
on visa for work or school, standing up
for justice can get you deported to a jail
in another country.

Even when our administration admits the error,
they do nothing to bring Kilmer Abrego Garcia
back from El Salvador.

There is a shortage of mercy
these days in the administration.(Pause)

Sometimes we are like Thomas in the gospel, and
we can proclaim Jesus as "our Lord and our God."

Other times we feel closed in and trapped
and must lock our doors for
fear of the authoritarian repercussions.

When that happens let us be aware of the gift of
this place where people still give of their wealth
to the mission of the church in a place
that God created, and a place that
still carries mercy.

Someone or some people provided that place

for the disciples to gather and hide.

We don't know what sort of things they did,
but I have a feeling it sounded a lot like:

"We don't know what to do, Lord.
We just know that we need you to come."

And God did.

Jesus entered in and said, "Peace be with you."

It must have been like an awakening for those
who were in the room and for Thomas
who experienced Jesus a week later.

We can't explain it, but define it as life after death.

He appeared in form that was touchable and mystical.

Coming through locked doors and departing
as soon as they recognized him.

We are offered no proof, but we do have trust
and we know God often sends people to us
to help us see what God's up to.

You or I, might even be that person God sends.

When that realization reaches us we might say,
“Whoa! Wait a second, who is this that’s
helping me, praying for me, guiding me
to see what I need to do?”

The answer is it is God in the other and
it is God in each one of us.

Divine help is there. (Pause)

Easter is about life after death, but not only
about what will happen in the future.

Easter resurrection happens right now.

Sometimes with civil disobedience,
sometimes when we go underground to lay low
for a while, but always with mercy.

Always.

The first words out of Jesus’ mouth both times
in that upper room were gospel news.

We expect condemnation, from him.

I’m sure the disciples had to have expected
condemnation for all their failings.

But there wasn't any condemnation.
There was only mercy.

"Peace be with you."

AMEN!