

Mercy – Not Getting What You Deserve

Psalm 136

I felt led to speak more about what I introduced to us last week and that is the mercy that Abraham received. While I spent time speaking about the growth of faith in his life and ours I wanted us to break it down just a little more this morning.

If you remember the graph that I used last week I shared it to show our upward movement in our relationship with God.

Markoe, please put up chart 1

If you were not here, this chart represents what I believe a Christian's life usually looks like. We start off with Christ at the bottom, on the right, and after accepting the salvation with Christ we are offered, we experience a great growth spurt. We don't know much but we know we love Christ and God and we eat up everything and every experience with Christ that we can.

Most times in the life of a new Christian, something comes crashing into their lives and they fail miserably. But they seek the Lord, ask forgiveness, learn from their mistake. They are not put off of their relationship with the Lord. They keep worshipping, seeking the Lord and experiencing growth in their faith and in their relationship with the Lord.

As you can see from this chart this is the way I believe most Christian growth in faith occurs. If we are staying in tune with the Holy Spirit, if we continue worshipping God and try to be obedient to the teachings He puts before us, we will grow in faith. There will be failures and falls but as time goes on in our relationship with God those failures will become less frequent and less severe.

Now, one of the things I really wanted to point out is the part of the process where God's mercy is working during our growth process.

Markoe, please put up Chart 2

As you can see from this chart, this is the place we see God's mercy working in our life the strongest.

Isn't it true, that after you have fallen, failed, when you come back to God, seeking His forgiveness, it is as if the sin or failure never occurred. God's mercy is so great, His forgiveness so complete that you are able to move in with Him like your failure never happened.

True, if your sin or failure is of the major type there will be some consequences and these consequences might take a while for you to work through. Also, there may be some guilt but that is also something with God's help you can work through as well.

But here's the deal in our relationship with God.

When Moses was up on the mountain with God he asked to see God's glory. God said the following.

Exodus 33:21, "Then the Lord said, 'Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.'"

And that is what happen. **Exodus 34:6-7, "And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will be no means clear the guilty; visiting the**

iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”

The glory of the Lord is described here as merciful, gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth. That is what we experience on the chart when, after we fall, we come back to Him in humility. We experience all the wonderful attributes of God.

But those who do not seek His forgiveness, those who do not fear God, they are held accountable by God for God is a just God. And the consequences of unforgiven sin travels through the next several generations of family. We know that to be true. I bet some of you have seen this happen in your own family and in people's lives around you. But God's judgment is always the last resort of God.

Look with me at Psalm 103 beginning in verse 8

Psalm 103:8, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

This is the nature of our God. He is a God of mercy, grace and love but He is a God of justice as well. He is a God of wrath. He is a God of anger but all those things are secondary compared to His mercy, grace and love. His anger is slow in coming.

PAUSE

When I was growing up our house set on a two lot area. It was great for us kids because we had room to play football, baseball and all kinds of stuff. I never appreciated mowing it, it seemed like it took forever.

But one of the things I remember was our patch of clover. I could spend hours sitting in the middle of that clover patch looking for a four leaf clovers. I also remember something else about that patch of clover. If we were running around barefoot, we needed to be careful because there

were honey bees working the clover for pollen. More than once I stepped on one and it was pretty painful as a kid.

But here's the thing about honey bees. Their nature isn't to sting anyone. They are busy doing what honey bees do, what their nature is. Going from flower to flower, collecting pollen, spreading pollen and then heading back to the hive to create honey which is food for the hive. It is a blessed life, a good life. Hanging out with flowers, other bees. Making sweet honey for the hive to feed on. It is their nature and they love doing it. It is only when they are threatened or their hive is threatened that they will sting someone.

God is like this in a way. He is busy spreading His love, His mercy, His forgiveness and it is not until He has to deal with evil that His wrath is seen. Even then it hurts Him because it is His desire that all come into salvation and that none perish. And just like the bees who deal with the threat to their hive, God is dealing with sin and evil because He wants to protect His children from the destructive effects of sin. So even His wrath is love.

Look with me at **Psalm 103:10**, "**He (God) does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.**"

Remember one of the last things I said about Abraham last week? Abraham didn't get what he deserved did he? After making all kinds of moves on his own, after showing his distrust in God in many ways, after showing just how weak his faith was in God, he still didn't put God off. God was still with him, blessing him, helping him, guiding him and loving on him.

Did Abraham deserve this? No, but this is who God is towards those who fear Him. This is who God is towards those who worship Him and come into a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus.

Psalm 103:11, “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.”

One of the great things about living here in the Wiggins area, away from the city and at this altitude is the clarity of the night sky. You can see the great expanse of heavens cant you? Some of the stars we see are millions of miles away. Further than we can imagine. This is the steadfast love God has towards you.

The writer of the Psalms goes on. **Psalm 103:12, “As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.”**

His forgiveness is that wide and that long. Even when we fail, fall, God takes that failure and removes it from us and from His sight from one end of the universe to the other.

O I pray that we would all understand and appreciate the love, grace and mercy God has for us.

Psalm 103:13-14, “Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. He is mindful that we are but dust.”

God knows our struggles. He sees the sinful society that we are born into. He knows the sinful nature that was passed onto to us. He knows our struggles, our short comings, our weaknesses and He is not put off by them.

Mark, please put up chart 4.

As you look at this chart I wanted to point out that God looks at our life at the beginning from the end. Meaning, He sees what we are becoming and will eventually become when we arrive in heaven. He knows the journey each of you are on and what it takes to grow in Christ-likeness.

In fact, in His mercy, grace and love, He is the one who is creating the growth.

When Paul was dealing with some divisions in the church at Corinth when he wrote them a letter dealing with it. Some of the people were saying in essence they were Paul's disciples, some were saying they were disciples of another teacher named Apollos and some were saying they were Christ's disciples.

But look at Paul's response. **1 Corinthians 3:6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."**

Yes God uses people, teachings, circumstances and many other things but He is the one who is causing the growth in Christ-likeness in our lives.

Markoe, please put up chart 3

Look at this last chart.

We stumble, we fail, we fall. In our humility we seek God, His forgiveness and in His mercy He meets us there but it doesn't stop there. In His mercy He begins to work in us even in our failures. He helps us see our shortcomings and how much we need Him and through this we grow. God causes our growth in Christ-likeness.

We serve an awesome God don't we. He is a God of mercy, a God of compassion and a God of love.

Great is God's faithfulness, His mercies are new every morning. He is worthy of our praise and our thanksgiving.

In ending I wanted us to do a response reading.

Markoe, if you would put the following up on screen.

Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26

O give thanks unto the LORD;

for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever.

² O give thanks unto the God of gods:

for his mercy endureth forever.

³ O give thanks to the Lord of lords:

for his mercy endureth forever.

⁴ To him who alone doeth great wonders:

for his mercy endureth forever.

⁵ To him that by wisdom made the heavens:

for his mercy endureth forever.

⁶ To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:

for his mercy endureth forever.

⁷ To him that made great lights:

for his mercy endureth forever:

⁸ The sun to rule by day:

for his mercy endureth forever:

⁹ The moon and stars to rule by night:

for his mercy endureth forever.

²³ Who remembered us in our low estate:

for his mercy endureth forever:

²⁴ And hath redeemed us from our enemies:

for his mercy endureth forever.

²⁵ Who giveth food to all flesh:

for his mercy endureth forever.

²⁶ O give thanks unto the God of heaven:

for his mercy endureth forever.