

12. To Love Mercy (3Q 2019—The Least of These)

Biblical material: Matt. 6:25–33; James 1:5–8; 2:15, 16; Isa. 52:7; 1 John 3:16–18; Isa. 58:1–10, Psalm 112:4, 5.

Quotes

- The wonderful news is that our Lord is a God of mercy, and He responds to repentance. *Billy Graham*
- The mercy of God has no limits if one turns to him with a sincere and contrite heart. *Pope Francis*
- I have come to know a God of compassion and mercy and love. *Philip Yancey*
- Nothing graces the Christian soul so much as mercy; mercy as shown chiefly towards the poor, that thou mayest treat them as sharers in common with thee in the produce of nature, which brings forth the fruits of the earth for use to all. *Ambrose*
- The more merciful acts thou doest, the more mercy thou wilt receive. *William Penn*
- We hand folks over to God’s mercy, and show none ourselves. *George Eliot*

Questions

Why is mercy so important? Why are we called to love mercy? What does that say about our sinful human nature? In what ways do we demonstrate we love mercy? How can we make this more practical than simply a philosophical viewpoint? In terms of the issues in the great controversy, how does loving mercy demonstrate God’s truth?

Bible summary

In Matt. 6:25–33, part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us some of the essential principles of his kingdom—particularly on how not to be worried about physical things. We are told to ask for wisdom from God (James 1:5–8). “If a brother or sister doesn’t have clothes, or food for the day, and you say to them, ‘Blessings on you! Stay warm and have a good meal!’ and you don’t provide what they need to survive, what’s the good of that?” James 2:15, 16 FBV. “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” Isa. 52:7 BSB. Jesus gives us the example of merciful service (1 John 3:16–18). Isa. 58:1–10 is a call to authentic worship. It’s good news for those who are merciful and generous (Psalm 112:4, 5).

Comment

What does God really want? That’s a central question that determines much of our theology, much of our relationship with God. Micah asked a similar question: “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:7 NIV).

Is it some kind of contract relationship? (Which is how often people view concepts of “covenant” in the Old Testament). Does God demand a specific worship routine? Does he want the sacrificial rituals? What exactly does God want?

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8 NIV). The fundamental *relationship* is summed up in those three core values. 1. Do what’s right. 2. Love to be merciful. 3. Walk in humility with your God. It’s an active participation that God is looking for—one in which we are totally engaged with him.

This week we’re looking at Number 2—Love mercy. Or as I believe the word is better translated, “love kindness.” For even the exercise of mercy can be a forensic act in which mercy is dispensed as a requirement, without even really caring for the recipient. Kindness on the other hand is far more relational—it presupposes a desire to want to be kind, to demonstrate kindness by acts of mercy.

In summary, what does God want *for us*? 1. He wants us to be happy. That is the most important thing—that we are truly happy, and that we can be saved into his kingdom. He doesn’t want us to be sad, or feel that we must suffer for him. Our God is not to be a burden to us. 2. He wants to be our friend. He wants to be with us, and to love us. He does not want us to honor him out of fear, but because we love him too. 3. He wants to live in us, to show us the way, and to be with us forever.

So, he gives us his invitation. “The Lord has told you what is good, and what the Lord asks from you: to do what is right, to love kindness, and to walk in humility with your God.” Micah 6:8 FBV. Just that? Just that! It’s so simple. God doesn’t want your fine gestures or your suffering sacrifice. He wants something deeper than that.

Real religion is not what you do, how you observe the rules, how good you look. It is to have the same nature of God. Doing what is right for the right motive. Right-living. This is what God wants. It is to have the same basis as God— to love kindness. To be kind and considerate, not to claim your “rights,” not to insist on having your own way. But most importantly of all—we are to walk in humility with our God.

We are to follow his way. We are to hold his hand. We are to talk with him as we walk. And to share this with everyone we meet on the way!

Ellen White Comments

It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth. {COL 415.3}

Grace, like an angel of mercy, makes his voice heard sweet and clear, repeating the story of the cross, the matchless love of Jesus. {RH, September 8, 1885 par. 6}

Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life. {LHU 98.3}

Use your time and strength in learning to be “fervent in spirit,” to deal justly, and to love mercy, “serving the Lord.” Remember that Christ says, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” {ML 243.2}