

# Genesis Ch42v1-38 - Our Sins They Are Many, His Mercy Is More

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[ 0 : 00 ] Start us by praying, and then we'll look at God's Word together. Father, as we've already been reflecting on this morning, I pray that we would be captivated by this picture of your mercy and kindness and compassion that we see in your Word this morning.

Lord, let our hearts be filled with genuine wonder and thankfulness at what we see. And let it lead us to be merciful as you are merciful.

It's in Christ's name we ask all this. Amen. Well, we have been following the story of Jacob's family over the past few months, and now the family of the promise is hanging in the balance.

God had promised that all the nations will be blessed through them, and ultimately through this promised seed, the one who would deal with sin and death once and for all.

But instead of being a blessing to the world, we find a family on the brink of extinction, desperately in need of God's mercy, his gift of undeserved kindness and compassion.

[ 1 : 20 ] Read from verse 1 with me again. When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, Why do you just keep looking at each other?

He continued, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die. So then, ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt.

But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. See, on the one hand, this family is about to die of starvation.

And on the other hand, they're about to fall apart from dysfunction. Let's take Jacob first. I mean, over the last 20 years of grief following Joseph's sudden disappearance, he's had a lot of time to reflect on what happened.

And we know that he knows that the brothers' story isn't quite adding up. And that there's something that they know about Joseph's disappearance that they just aren't saying.

[ 2 : 30 ] I mean, why doesn't he send Benjamin with them? He simply doesn't trust them, does he? In fact, at the end of the chapter, as we read, he has this furious outburst in which he shouts at the brothers, you have deprived me of my children.

The tension in this family is rising. And this family is hanging in the balance. And as for the brothers, well, what a bunch of scoundrels they are.

I mean, for 20 years now, they've maintained this grand lie about Joseph, covering their tracks completely. Jacob's name means deceiver, but now he's the one who's being deceived by his sons.

To date, there's been no hint of remorse on their part. They don't care that their father has been suffering these last 20 years, let alone Joseph. And now these rogues are desperate.

Their family's about to fall apart. They're all about to die if they don't get to food. They are in desperate need of mercy.

[ 3 : 41 ] But the problem is, they don't deserve one bit of it. But mercy is what they get. In spades.

Totally undeserved. And totally free. And as we walk with the brothers all the way down to Egypt and back again, we're going to learn three things about what mercy is and is not.

Now, you're not going to see them on the screen, I think. You've got to remember them in your head. Number one, mercy is for the undeserving, not the deserving. Mercy is for those who know they need it, not for the self-righteous.

And mercy, thirdly, is for the humble, not the proud. So first of all, mercy is for the undeserving, not the deserving.

Now, in verse 5, the brothers set off for Egypt. And we watch on as in God's amazing providence, they walk straight into the court of Joseph, now governor of Egypt.

[ 4 : 53 ] And even more incredible, Joseph is the man in charge of all the grain supplies. The only person in the world with the power to help these brothers is the very person that they sold into slavery 20 years ago.

Isn't that incredible? I mean, you couldn't even dream that up. Although, funnily enough, Joseph did. You remember those dreams he had 20 years ago about his brothers bowing down to him? God gave him those dreams. And now, it has just happened. Because God's word never fails. Even if you have to wait 20 years or more for it to come to pass, it will.

Because he cannot go against his word to us. Now, let's not presume that this was all joy for Joseph to see his brothers bowing down in front of him in the court.

Let's keep in mind that when it came to naming his firstborn son, this was just at the end of the last chapter, Joseph called him Forget, or Manasseh in Hebrew.

[ 6 : 02 ] And he called him Forget because, he said, it's because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's households. See, Joseph was moving on with his life.

He put all that in the past. But in a split second, that all changed. Everything that these wicked brothers did to him dragged right back up to the surface.

And what is he going to do now? Joseph now has the power of life and death over his brothers. The tables have turned completely. Their lives are all in his hands.

They've come for food to save them from dying. But all they deserve is punishment. What will Joseph do? Well, verse 7.

As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them. But he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. Where do you come from?

[ 7 : 06 ] He asked. From the land of Canaan, they replied, to buy food. Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, You are spies.

You have come to see where our land is unprotected. Now, pause a second. What is Joseph doing here? Well, I don't know what you think, but it seems to me like he's given them a little taste of their own medicine, isn't he?

I mean, he knows that they aren't spies. But he accuses them of it anyway. And now they begin to feel the sting of injustice for themselves. Carry on in verse 10.

No, my lord, the brothers answered. Your servants have come to buy food. We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men.

Not spies. Honest men? Well, that's pretty rich now, isn't it? Coming from them. And they can't fool Joseph either, can they?

[ 8 : 11 ] I mean, Joseph knows their history. Now, I grew up in a home with a brother who was nine years older, wiser, and smarter than I am.

And I just clearly remember many times he would sit back on the sofa, arms folded, and look at me and say, I can read you like a book. And that was to say that I know what you're saying, but I know what you're actually thinking.

I know what's really going on inside you. That's because my brother knew me so well, and I still couldn't figure out, how did you know that? I couldn't hide. I couldn't pretend with him. He knew me so well.

And nor could Joseph's brothers. They couldn't hide or pretend in front of him. Well, Joseph continues to make them sweat in the next few verses, insisting that they are spies, and throwing them all into prison for three days.

And once the three days are up, only one of the brothers will be released to go back to the family. For the only reason, to bring back Benjamin.

[ 9 : 17 ] Everyone else will stay in prison. No grain. It's a harsh sentence. And as the brothers sit on the cold floor of that prison, they have officially hit rock bottom.

All the while, the food is running out for their starving families at home. If they were desperate before, they're hopeless now. Their lives are completely at the mercy of this Egyptian governor, who they don't even realize is the very brother they betrayed.

These brothers need mercy, but they only deserve punishment. And Joseph has three days to dream up his payback.

And we're watching on, and we're thinking, here it is, Joseph. You have them now. Make them pay for every ounce of pain that they inflicted on you.

Who would blame him? But Joseph's response is not as we expect, is it? Because in verses 18 to 20, Joseph shows mercy to his undeserving brothers and their starving families.

[10:31] In fact, instead of keeping nine in jail, like he said he was going to do, he lets nine go free to take grain back home, keeping only one back as a guarantee to see Benjamin again.

And then he stacks kindness on top of kindness as he sends them home with provisions for the journey. Now, he didn't have to do that, did he? And after they have paid for the grain, he secretly takes the money and puts it back in their sacks, refusing to take any payment.

This is staggering mercy, shown to those who are utterly undeserving. And I think that we can all see ourselves in the brother's portrait.

Because we have all grievously sinned against our father in heaven and betrayed him in his love. Despite knowing that God is our creator, sustainer, and joy giver, day by day, by the way we live, we say, I am king.

I know what's best. I don't need you. And just like the brother's sins were laid bare before Joseph, so the full extent of our rebellion is laid bare before God.

[11:53] I mean, we can't hide or pretend. We are guilty. And friends, that leaves us in grave danger.

Something ultimately worse than starvation or a prison sentence. God's word tells us that we deserve judgment for our sin. Separation from God for eternity.

And no amount of good that we could ever do would make up for it. Or make it right. See, the bottom line for us is that we don't deserve mercy from God.

But the astonishing reality of the gospel is that God doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. If Joseph showed undeserved kindness to his brothers, how much more has God shown extravagant mercy to us, undeserving sinners?

He sent Jesus to take the punishment we were due. The punishment we deserved for our betrayal. Defeating our death.

[13:10] Giving us eternal life with him. That is mercy. And his mercy doesn't stop there. He pours out his kindness on us every single day.

Giving us life and breath. Food and shelter. Love and laughter. As Lamentations 3 says, His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning. Brothers and sisters, remember, God shows his mercy to the undeserving, not the deserving.

Are you thankful for this? Or if you have yet to receive it, why do you wait? Receive his mercy offered in Christ.

Not because you deserve it, but because God's mercy is for the undeserving. As we continue in the story, we're also going to learn that secondly, mercy is for those who know they need it, not for the self-righteous.

[14:16] I mean, you can't ultimately receive God's mercy if you don't think you need it, if you don't realize that you have a sin problem.

And in verse 21, the brothers finally realize that they have a sin problem. And obviously, they're still feeling the sting of having to leave Simeon behind in jail.

And that is leading them to reflect on their own past actions. We're going to read from verse 21.

They said to one another, surely we are being punished because of our brother.

We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we wouldn't listen. That's why this distress has come on us. Reuben replied, didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?

But you wouldn't listen. Now we must give an accounting for his blood. They didn't realize that Joseph could understand them since he was using an interpreter.

[15:20] So for the first time that we know of in 20 years, the brothers acknowledge their guilt and their sin. Or they knew the right thing to do, all right, but they did what was evil.

And they don't have any complaints, do they? Now they face the judgment they are due. They see this as being from God. And in all our lives, we must come to the very same point as these brothers did if we are ever to receive God's mercy and Noah's forgiveness.

But you see, our problem is that we often deny that we have a real sin problem. We say things like this, oh, I make a few mistakes here and there.

But, I mean, essentially I'm a good person. You know, I do good things. And this is what the religious leaders in Jesus' time thought.

And in Luke chapter 5, they rebuked Jesus. Because what was Jesus doing? Well, he was eating with thieves and prostitutes. And they were like, Jesus, hold on.

[16:30] Why are you eating with those bad people over there? You should be eating with good people like us. And Jesus, he knows that they've got it all wrong. And this is what he says to them in Luke chapter 5.

He says, it's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call those who are right with God in their own eyes, but sinners to repentance.

Now, think about it. Would you ever go to the doctor without first admitting that you were sick? No, you wouldn't, would you?

In fact, sometimes that's the hardest thing to admit, that we are sick. Because we want, actually, to be self-sufficient. I know I find that hard. When I start to feel a little bit off, I'm like, no, I'm fine.

I'm perfectly fine. I'm just going to power on with my day, and then 10 minutes later, I'm, you know, throwing up or something. But my problem is, actually, I'm just denying it until I can't deny it anymore.

[17:36] And you know what? Jesus says, this is kind of a picture of our hearts, because in the same way, we don't want to admit our sickness of sin in our hearts and our need for mercy.

We'd much rather say, thanks, Jesus, for your offer of mercy, but I'm pretty good by myself. Thank you. But these brothers, their eyes were finally opened to see the extent of their sin.

And for us, when we first understand our sickness of sin, we instantly realize we only deserve judgment from God.

Thanks, Ralph. But then we see Jesus, who steps in to take that judgment for us, which leads us to confess our ultimate need of him and what he's done for us.

And that is the moment that we receive God's mercy and are forgiven, welcomed as children of God. Remember, God's mercy is for those who know they need it, not for those who falsely think that they don't, those who are righteous in their own eyes.

[19:01] So I have to ask you the question, which description best fits you? If you don't really see your sickness of sin or think that you're that bad, I encourage you, read God's word and ask him to open your eyes to see it and he will.

So as the chapter comes to a close, these brothers are going to discover that Joseph's kindness was even greater than they had realized before. And we will learn, thirdly, that this mercy that God offers can only be received by the humble, not the proud.

Look at verse 25. Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack and to give them provisions for their journey.

After this was done for them, they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left. And at the place where they stopped for the night, one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack.

My silver has been returned, he said to his brothers. Here it is in my sack. Their hearts sank. And they turned to each other, trembling, and said, what is this that God has done to us?

[20:23] So they arrived back to their father, they relayed the whole saga, and then look down at verse 35. As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver.

When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened. Doesn't that strike you as strange? At the moment, they realize the extent of Joseph's mercy.

They tremble in fear. That might be the thing we'd least expect them to do. And we don't know exactly why, but here are three plausible reasons why they may have trembled before his mercy.

A, judging on their colorful past, these rogues don't seem to be the kind and merciful type. I think you'd agree. And maybe Joseph's mercy and kindness frightened them so much because mercy like that demands a life change, doesn't it?

You can't just continue on as you were after experiencing mercy like that and they weren't prepared to change. Or B, maybe they were frightened of his mercy because they just thought it was too good to be true.

[21:42] I mean, surely the ruler of all of Egypt would not be as kind and merciful as this. There must have been some mistake and they would have to pay him back.

In fact, in the next chapter we read, they would go back with double the amount. And Jacob, Jacob is fearful of the governor's kindness also because in the last few verses of the chapter he refuses to allow his sons go back to Egypt despite all the kindness that they were shown there.

for Jacob, it was also too good to be true. Or maybe they realized this was a gift of mercy and kindness but they were just too proud to receive it.

Maybe they just wanted to earn it themselves though they could never earn Joseph's mercy after all they did to him nor ever compensate him for all the suffering they caused.

You see, here we learn that God's mercy can only be truly received by the humble not the proud. God's mercy is for those who humbly say thank you for a gift of forgiveness they never deserved nor could ever pay back.

[ 23 : 11 ] in a few moments we're going to sing a song together called His Mercy is More and I think these words say it better than I could. They're on the screen there.

What riches of kindness he lavished on us. His blood was the payment his life was the cost.

We stood neath a debt we could never afford our sins they are many his mercy is more.

Brothers and sisters we could never repay God the debt of sin we owed. We could never repay Jesus for the ultimate price he paid with his life to purchase our forgiveness.

forgiveness. So today if you are trying to earn God's mercy you will never receive it. It's not possible.

[ 24 : 18 ] Or if you're trying to repay God for the mercy he's shown you you haven't understood it. Unlike the brothers in this instance we must receive God's mercy as a gift in humility.

all we must do is say thank you and rest in his mercy. Because God's mercy is for the undeserving not the deserving.

It's for the one who knows they need it not the self-righteous. And it's for the humble not the one who's proud who says I can earn it myself.

Which description best fits you? And as we finish here's one last implication of all that we've heard. If we really have received so great a mercy that changes how we respond to other people's sin and failure also doesn't it?

I mean our wider community looking in on us in Cargoline Baptist Church they should see a people who show mercy and kindness that doesn't make sense. A kind of mercy that's given even when it's not reciprocated or deserved.

[ 25 : 44 ] A mercy given with no ulterior motives no self-interest not looking for anything in return. what about when someone in your family snaps at you or is selfish in their attitude towards you?

Maybe it's a sibling parent a spouse our natural reaction is to get our own back right? But what would it look like to be merciful in that situation instead?

Speaking a kind and gentle word in response. Does any one of us find that easy? Absolutely not. But we do have the Holy Spirit's power to draw upon to live this new life in Christ.

Life as a family is a life of giving and receiving mercy day by day. Or what about when someone from the church family hurts you? Maybe they passed a throwaway comment or voiced their opinions in a way that lacked sensitivity and kindness.

Our natural reaction is to withdraw, to resent that person or even to gossip about it. What would it mean to show mercy instead?

[ 27 : 14 ] What would it look like to choose to love even if that person doesn't deserve it in that moment? Or what about when someone in work or school goes out of their way to purposefully undermine your name?

Not hard to imagine what our natural reaction would be right there. To get our own back, whatever the cost. mercy means that we won't spread gospel about them or return ill for ill.

And I don't know what situation you're thinking of in which someone doesn't deserve your kindness for the way that they have acted towards you.

But the point is this. If we've been forgiven so great a debt, one we could never afford to repay, that frees us to forgive the debts people owe to us.

With God's help, we can be merciful. So remember, we are more sinful and undeserving than we ever realized.

[ 28 : 39 ] But God's mercy is greater than we have ever dreamed. In repentance and humility, we receive it from him.

And we pour it out on others. Let's pray. thank you, Lord.

Thank you for your extravagant mercy poured out on us. Help us to receive it in humility and in thankfulness.

Lord, we confess how often we respond in anger and revenge to others' sin. help us to be merciful as you are merciful.

For Jesus' sake, we pray. Amen. Well, we're going to sing that song now, His mercy is more. Let's use this as an opportunity to wonder anew at God's mercy on us and also to put it into practice in our own lives.

[ 30 : 00 ] Please stand if you're able. Thank you.