

Mercy, not Justice

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[0:00] Amen. Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

! Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions. According to your steadfast love, remember me for the sake of your goodness, O Lord. Father, we pray may only your word be spoken and only your word heard.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. And please be seated. If I may be so bold as to begin with a commercial.

I can't really say commercial, but just a different perspective, so to speak, and so on. So many of you are looking for authors to read and so on to contemplate.

I would highly recommend the particular minister. He's a Puritan pastor, F.W. Borum.

[1:17] Some of you, if you haven't heard of him, I highly, highly recommend him. He spent his entire, I mean, obviously he grew up in England, but in Turnbridge, England, but then his entire ministry was spent in New Zealand, Tasmania, and Australia.

But he has an ability to bring out the most simple situations and apply the gospel truth to them. But in one of his articles that he wrote, he shared an account of a Scottish minister, Dr. Davidson.

He was a minister in the Scottish Free Church in Drubbentucky. And it was Christmas Day, in fact, Christmas night.

And that year it happened to fall on a Sunday. And he preached at the Kirk that morning and spent the day, as the story goes, visiting the sick and the lonely of the people in the village there.

And when evening came, he briefly hosted a friend, a friend named Drumshoe. And during the conversation at the fireplace, Dr. Davidson became strangely introspective and retrospective.

[2:37] And then he shared. He said, you and I, Drumshoe, he solemnly observed that we will have to go on a long journey soon and give account for our lives.

And at that point, our lives in drum-talking. Perhaps we have done our best as men can. And I think we have tried.

But as many things that we have done otherwise, some we ought to have done and some we ought not to have done at all.

It seems to me now that the less we say on that great day, the better. We shall wish for mercy rather than justice.

And as the doctor looked earnestly over his glasses at his confidant, we would be none the worse, Drumshoe, of a good friend to say a word for us both in that great court.

[3:45] Now, as Dr. Davidson shared in that final conversation that he had, he saw Drumshoe to the door. They said goodbye and he watched him vanish, leaving a trail of footprints in the snow.

And Dr. Davidson returned to the fireplace where his dog, Sky, or excuse me, Psych, was waiting for his return. And this, while this conversation did occur on Christmas night, it does have great impact for us today as we begin our Lenten journey.

For in those simple words that Dr. Davidson gave, he brings up two great themes that we need to remember here in Lent for us to ponder. Now, he ministered well over a century ago in Scotland on the other side of the world.

But yet, his words hold true today. Dr. Davidson reminds us that our early 21st sensibilities so often drive us and draw us away from God.

So often we tend to ignore our need for mercy. So often we'll tend to ignore these ideas that we have and we start taking on a functional Pelagian worldview.

[5:10] What do I mean by that? What I mean by that is we start thinking that no matter what we do, no matter what we say, oh, God will accept it. It's okay. If we just do enough good, God will let

us in.

We start believing the jokes and stuff that we hear about heaven and meeting St. Peter at the gate. And we think that's it, isn't it? These two great ideas that Dr. Davidson reminds us as we begin this Lenten journey are things that we should hold on to because not to can be devastating.

See, the first thing Dr. Davidson mentioned was he said, it seems to me now the less we say on that great day of the past, the better.

We shall wish for mercy and not for justice. Now, how many times have you heard such statements? You know, when I get to heaven, I'm going to ask God this.

Right? If you heard those things, some of you might have even mentioned that. You know, we ponder questions from an earthly standard and we apply our ideas.

[6:24] So when I get to, I'm going to ask God about this. You know, it could be anything, you know, but like, Lord, why did you make the mosquito? Why did you make the platypus? You know, was that a mosquito?

Ain't God in creation? Or maybe we echo questions that Johnny Carson put to Billy Graham on one of his few appearances on The Tonight Show.

When Billy Graham sat down, Johnny Carson looked to him and said, will there be golf in heaven? To which Dr. Graham very wisely looked at him and said, if you need it, there will.

You know, when we're our childhood pets, you know, we'll look and, you know, we'll say, well, we'll see our kitty cats and our dogs.

Well, I see my family members, aunts and uncles and grandpas and grandmas. Or if we want to take a little more moral position, we'll start asking God, like, why did things happen this way?

[7:28] Why the killing fields of Cambodia? Why Auschwitz? Why Buchenwald?

Why Dachau? Why Treblinka? Why Flossenbürg? Why did individuals have to die that way?

Why? Why? Why? We start asking these questions, but in the midst of those questions, isn't there a little bit of a hint?

Yeah, I'm okay. I've done fine, haven't I? You know, there's a little bit of an independency.

Everything is fine on me. No, I, you know, I may have said a couple bad words on Facebook or Twitter, and that's fine, right?

God, you're going to look over those, aren't you? Yeah, after all, you don't care about social media, right, God? Right? We don't care about that.

[8:36] You know, if we take this type of attitude as we enter our Lenten journey this year, we'll start missing, really, the whole point of Lent.

You know, we tend to think and we tend to forget about passages like Matthew 25 when we read, Before Him will be gathered all the nations and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

And He will place the sheep on His right but the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, Come to me, you, all who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world.

And to those on the left, He will say, Depart from me, you curse it, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.

You know, such kind of attitudes that we have when we don't take Lent very seriously we really just assume that we're going to be on the right-hand side of the king as opposed to the left-hand side of the king.

[9:56] Oh, I'm going to be with the sheep for sure. All right? But not the goats. Nope. Not me. You know? God's not going to hold those, you know, few little words that I said, those little fits of anger that I said.

No, He's not going to hold those against me. No. Uh-uh. Surely, God, my political views are righteous, aren't they? I believe that we should feed others, don't you?

That's what we should do, right? That's what all this is about, right? And we just do enough, you'll let me in. If I just do enough good stuff, you'll let me in, won't you?

Do we really take seriously Isaiah chapter 6? When we read when Isaiah saw the throne room vision, what did he do?

He said, Woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I have dwelled in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts, or we don't think about

John in Revelation chapter 1, when he has a similar, a similar experience, when he says, When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

[11:26] You know, nowhere in Scripture does it mention in either one of those passages that they said, Well, God, I have this I want to ask you about this, right?

Nowhere in there is it mentioned anything about when we get to heaven. Yeah, he's going to have an open court. Just like for some funerals. Let's have him open mic now.

Here, let's hand it off over here. Peter, would you take the mic over here and hand it to this person and give it to them? Nowhere. Nowhere. And just as Dr. Davidson has said and reminds us, on that great day, we're just going to have to plead for mercy and not for justice.

Why? Because in that case, our justice is dependent upon His mercy and not on our own ideas of what justice is or is not.

Which brings us to the second point that Dr. Davidson said when he said, We would be none the worst drum shoe for a friend to say a good word for us on that great day.

[12:47] You know, he highlights a need that we all have. Because so often we think about our time if we get to heaven or when we get to heaven, we start thinking like we're Job.

When in Job chapter 9, what does he ask? He says, Truly I know that it is so, but how can a man be right before God? For one wished to contend with Him.

One could not answer Him. Once in a thousand times, such a quandary, isn't it, Job? Job's looking for a friend.

Job's looking for help, trying to figure out why he was suffering, why he was going through this stuff. And that's what he's doing.

So what do we do? We just continue on in our walk and we start thinking ourselves in our Christian walk and in this Lenten time and we start thinking of ourselves like John Wayne.

[13:57] Yeah, we do. Don't we do that? We do. Picture John Wayne in true grit. There he is on his horse, the valley in front of him with Robert Duvall and all his friends on the other side.

And so what do they do? They just throw a few things. Well, Brewster, you're not good enough. And they kind of throw little things insulting his mother and his father and all these other things and so on.

So what's John Wayne do? And true nice American Western stuff, what does he do? Well, he insults Robert Duvall and his friends again and then pulls out his guns, starts running forward and his horse, you know, and just knocking out all the guys and of course wins the day.

All by himself, he's going to stand up and do all this. Is that the Christian walk? Is that what we need, the idea in order to satisfy God?

Is it one of those that say, I can do all this and balance the scales in my favor when I stand on that day before God? When we look for an advocate, there should be two scriptures immediately pop into our minds when Jesus said in John chapter 14, he said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will ask the Father and he will give you another, the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

[15:35] you know him for he dwells in you and will be with you. Then in 1 John chapter 2, and we hear it every week in the comfortable words, words, my little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Yes, we have an advocate, an advocate, and the word there is paracletos, paracletos, a paraclete, not a parakeet, a paraclete, who which means one who appears on another's behalf, a mediator or an intercessor, a helper.

That was Augustine of Hippo who wrote, He, Christ, who knew no sin, God made to be sin for us, God to whom we are to be reconciled, has thus made him the sacrifice for sin by which we are reconciled.

He himself is therefore sin, as we ourselves are righteous, but on our own God, not ourselves, but in him.

Jesus, as he was sin, not our own, but our rooted in him, and he showed forth his kindness to sinful flesh when he was crucified in the likeness of sin.

[17:15] See, Jesus himself on that day on the cross was our advocate. He was our helper. He was our counselor. He was on the cross dying for each and every one of us for the sins of the whole

world.

The one of whom before whom judgment must be made was paying the price for us. And the Holy Spirit comes down upon us and to lead us. You see, that's the whole work of the Trinity. The entire Trinity is at work in this idea of being an advocate for us. Think about the great litany which we prayed this morning. How did it begin? God the Father, creator of heaven and earth. God the Son, redeemer of the world. God the Holy Spirit, sanctifier of the faithful.

Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, one God. God. And let's not forget the today. The today. How does it begin? Father of majesty, unbounded, your true and only Son, worthy of all praise and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.

[18:31] You see, on that day, on that day, we will look, not just, not just for justice, but for one, an advocate, the one who will stand for us, the one for whom we can point to, the one who will point down and say, Father, I died for them.

The price has been paid. The separation from you has been taken care of. Because I paid the price for them on the cross.

You see, every day during Lent, we work our way closer and closer to Holy Week. And we contemplate how can we approach the cross.

I mean, this year, here at Holy Trinity, you're going to be considering that every Wednesday in a series of teachings. You'll be approaching, how do we approach the Lord?

How do we approach the Lord? Through fearing the Lord, praising the Lord, obeying the Lord, honoring the Lord, praying to the Lord. All of those things. That's what our Lenten walk is about.

[19:54] Remembering the mercy that God gave us on the cross, and being our advocate, and being the one who there for us paid the price for us.

You see, just kind of today, priming the pump for Lent. priming the pump for this Lenten walk that we have. Remember Dr. Davidson's words.

It says, on that day, we would probably wish for mercy and not justice. You see, it's not about what we do.

It's about what Jesus did. we can rely on our own ideas, and our own actions, and our own morality, and all these other things.

But our separations from God is nothing that we can do except to cling to the blood-stained wood of the cross at the foot of the cross.

[21:04] We cannot depend upon our own righteousness. Jesus, all we can do is rely on the blood of the one who died for us.

If we don't, we're just fooling ourselves. We're just fooling ourselves. We think of ourselves as being among the, just assuming we're going to be among the sheeps and not among the goats.

Christians cannot, we must not, accept the world's ideas that if we just do enough good stuff, God's going to let us in. If we just go along with this or that policy, that's good enough because that's what we're supposed to do.

That's what God would want us to do. Because this Lent, we need to remember that it is only by God's righteousness, the Christ himself, his atonement available to us on the cross.

This is what we have to cling to. Now, Dr. Davidson, after he sat at the fire that night, he petted and he shared with his dog.

[22:17] His servant, John, came in quietly, unknowing to Dr. Davidson. Dr. Davidson looked down to his dog, Sky, you're a bonnie beast, Sky, exclaimed the doctor, for I think he made a very good dog.

Ye have been true and kind to your master, Sky, and you'll miss him when he leaves ye someday. You'll also die and they'll bury ye, and I doubt that it'll be the end of ye, O sky.

O ye never heard, O God, Sky, or why, or who the Savior is, for you're just a pure doggy.

Sky, your master, is minister of drum talky, a sinner saved by grace. The next morning, John, the servant, went into the room and found Dr.

Davidson there, who had died in the night. His last words to his dog, a sinner saved by grace. And Sky was just there with his master.

[23:40] That's all he could do. When we approach God on that great day, will you be trusting in your own abilities and your own righteousness or on the one who gave himself for us?

That is the question we all face today in Lent, and that is the question we all must face each and every day of our life. So let us today, as we begin this Lenten, as we consider the different approaches to God, let us remember that ultimately we cannot approach him at all on that great day day, because only God himself is righteous.

Only in him and in the blood-stained foot of the cross can we hold on. Only in the cross and the empty tomb and his ascension, his intercession, are we able to find any guidance to live for him. he is our righteousness, he is our mercy, he is our advocate. So on that day, we may want justice, but let us always remember that God's justice is whom we will be held up against, and that justice only is held in the balance to the blood of Jesus Christ.

May we this day again, praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for his mercy, for his justice, for his righteousness, and may we cling to his mercy from the advocate, the one who died for us.

[25 : 34] Let us pray. Gracious Father, we come to you people seeking you, unable to cross the chasm and the gulf between you and ourselves and our souls.

Come now and fill us. Refresh us anew in the power of your Holy Spirit to know you anew and to live for you.

for it is on you we depend in whom all glory and mercy. May we again give ourselves anew to you. In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.