

The Command to be Merciful

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[0 : 00] The scripture this morning is taken from Luke chapter 6. Luke chapter 6, beginning at verse 27 and reading through to 32.

! Luke chapter 6, 27 to 32. How's the title? Love your enemies. But I say to you who hear, love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you.

To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. And from the one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

Give to everyone who begs from you. And from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

[1 : 22] If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even the sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?

Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Be merciful. But love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return.

And your reward will be great. And you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Be merciful. Even as your Father is merciful. Let's pray.

[2 : 37] Lord, how grateful we are that we have the privilege of hearing your word. Lord, we know that you are able to do with your word what we cannot do.

You are able to cause it to come alive, to make it plain, and to make it applicable in our lives. And so, Lord, that is what we ask that you would do today.

Lord, bless us, cause it's time that we have to be fruitful, cause it to be meaningful to us.

This is our prayer. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Have you ever been to a place or perhaps a gathering where someone was speaking, and you thought to yourself, that's really not for me.

That's, that was really just a waste of my time, because nothing that was said is applicable to me.

[4 : 07] It's not relevant. I'm never going to encounter anything like that. I know it's happened to me.

And I suspect it's happened to you. And maybe it has happened to you more than once. Maybe it's happened to you on multiple occasions.

Here's how you might gauge relevance as it relates to what we are about to talk about for just a few moments.

If you have never been overwhelmed. If you've never found yourself in a circumstance, perhaps of your own making, where you said, woe is me.

Or perhaps if you've never done something wrong, where you needed to be forgiven. Or if someone has never wronged you.

[5 : 32] If none of those things has ever happened to you, then I would say you are in the wrong place. But I suspect that I've covered all of us.

In fact, I'm pretty sure of it, that I've covered all of us. In the words that were just read to us, Luke records our Savior as saying in verse 36, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Here we find Jesus teaching his disciples in these few short verses about mercy.

We all know that the scriptures tell us a great deal about our relationship with God. The scriptures tell us who he is.

He is high and lifted up. That he is a God of grace. He is a God of might. He is a God of judgment.

[6 : 59] Tells us we ought to obey him. The scriptures tell us a lot about our relationship with God. And we also know that the scripture tells us a lot about how we ought to interact with one another.

How we ought to live with one another. I needn't remind us that we live in a fallen world.

A world that is filled with sin and ungodliness. A world filled with pain, suffering, disappointment, and even personal offense.

So a very practical question arises when we consider the reality of the world that we live in.

Here are a couple of questions that arise for believers. How must we as believers respond to the suffering and the lack that we see all around us?

[8 : 24] How are believers respond to the suffering and the lack that we see all around us?

And here's the other question. How would we as believers respond when someone wrongs us?

Jesus answers those questions. And ones like them when he said, Be merciful.

Be merciful. Even as your father is merciful. That's what he says. Be merciful. Even as your father is merciful.

So my task today is really simple. It's to remind us of this command. The command to be merciful.

[9 : 38] And that's all I'm doing. I'm reminding us of what Jesus says. Because all of us, I believe, know that this is what he says. Be merciful.

And here is what I believe. In fact, this is what I know. That as someone who professes to believe. You ought to be aiming for a certain way to live in your overall disposition or the way you interact with people.

You ought to be aiming for a certain way. You ought to be aiming to live in your own way. You ought to be aiming to live a certain way. And in this instance, I should have the expectation that as a soldier in the army of the Lord, you are seeking to follow this command.

That you are seeking, you and I are seeking to be merciful soldiers. That we are seeking to grow in our extension of mercy to those who need it.

[10 : 50] That we are seeking to be merciful to those who need it.

But Jesus commands us. He says, be merciful. And that is the charge that all of us have. To be merciful.

It's that simple. And so today I've organized my thoughts around two points. The first is the command to be merciful.

And the second, the reasons to be merciful. You can see them right there in verse 36. Jesus says, be merciful.

That's a command. Then he says, even as your father is merciful. And in those words, we find the reasons for us to be merciful.

[12 : 19] But first let's consider the command to be merciful. The first thing that we must understand is that this is in fact a command.

This is a command. It's not a choice. When Jesus uses the word be, be is an imperative.

It is a command. He says, be merciful. Jesus is not offering advice. He is issuing a command.

He is not making a suggestion. He is issuing a command to his followers. He says, be merciful.

Brothers and sisters, that is our charge.

Those of us who follow Jesus, that is our charge as soldiers in the army of the Lord to be merciful.

[13 : 25] You know, you don't go into the army and decide that you're going to disobey the general. You don't say that outright. Now listen, it's true that perhaps you don't obey him perfectly.

That's one thing to not obey perfectly, but to go in and say, you know, I'm not going to try. It doesn't work that way.

Jesus commands us to be merciful. This means mercy is not optional for the Christian. It's not optional for us.

We're not told to be merciful if we possess a gentle personality. Jesus doesn't leave this as an option to those with gentle personalities.

He did not leave it to our emotions. Nor did he leave it to the circumstances that we find ourselves in.

[14 : 31] He says, be merciful. Brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters. And guess what? Implicit in this command.

Is the truth that Jesus actually has the authority to command us. As his followers, he has the authority to issue commands.

And he commands his disciples to be merciful. And if we belong to him, then obedience is non-negotiable.

But what is mercy? What is mercy? Mercy? In the scriptures, mercy means withholding something harmful or unpleasant that someone deserves.

It also means showing compassion. But can I tell you what mercy is not?

[15 : 47] And perhaps that helps us a little bit further. Mercy is not justice.

Justice says you're wrong and you must pay. Justice says you get what you deserve. Justice says you did it and you're going to pay for it.

You earn it and you're going to pay for it. That's what justice says. We have a justice system. You go before the judge.

The judge has to tell you what your penalty is based on the law. But mercy says you were wrong. But I won't hold it against you. That's the difference. Justice demands punishment. Mercy says no. Mercy is not grace.

[16 : 56] Grace gives us what we don't deserve. Grace gives us what we don't deserve.

We get something. We're saved by grace. We don't deserve it. We get something that we don't deserve. But mercy withholds what we do deserve.

Grace gives us what we don't deserve. And mercy withholds what we do deserve. mercy is not forgiveness although forgiveness is a component of mercy mercy is broader, so much broader than forgiveness listen to these words because Jesus, if you look at these few verses that were read just this morning one might think that this verse, verse 36 is out of place and if you consider the heading in particular you might say I wonder what's happening here, all of a sudden Jesus is talking, I say to you who hear love your enemies and then he comes down and he says be merciful even as your father is merciful, can I suggest to you though that what Jesus is doing here is telling us his disciples how we ought to demonstrate how we can demonstrate mercy in our daily lives let's look at what he says here

Jesus says to us his disciples he says love your enemies you want to be merciful he says love your enemies and do good to those who hate you brothers and sisters brothers and sisters this is different the world doesn't say this the world says you go and you destroy your enemy the world says you extract from them everything that you can the world says you make it hard for your enemies but Jesus says love your enemies brothers and sisters and do good to those who hate you can I tell you that this is not an ordinary thing this is not something that you and I can conjure up we need God's help to do this

I mean if you know that you need God's help to love those who don't do good to you those who hate you and make it known that they hate you but Jesus says to us brothers and sisters he says love your enemies and do good to those who hate you but he doesn't stop there he doesn't stop there and he says this not to unbelievers so if you're an unbeliever Jesus you're right he's not talking to you but those of us who have who are determined to follow Jesus he says to us love your enemies do good to those who hate you bless those who curse you bless those who curse you and pray for those who abuse you can you imagine this is a saying to us brothers and sisters he leaves no room for guessing here he is clear here

[21 : 23] Jesus says bless those who curse you somebody curses you somebody speaks ill of you Jesus says don't return the favor he says you bless them bless those who curse you and for those who abuse you he says pray for them and not fire and brimstone he says pray for their well-being pray that their eyes will be open to the truth of who he is pray for them and then he says to the what who strikes you on the cheek strikes you on one cheek Jesus says offer the other cheek brothers and sisters this is not what we say this is what he says Jesus says offer the other cheek also and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either and what Jesus is telling us brothers and sisters is that when someone humiliates you when they slander you when they belittle you when they put you down

Jesus is saying don't you do likewise he says to us don't fight back he says take it he says mercy is not vindictive mercy does not wish ill on people no matter the circumstance one who strikes you on the cheek offer the other brothers and sisters can I tell you can I tell you that all of us have found ourselves in very difficult circumstances I can tell you things situations that I've been in and I know if I were to ask you if I were to ask you to go down and tell us about how you were offended you can start here and tell a story after story after story after story and so guess what what's my point my point is number one you're not alone that's the first point the second point is that God knows and

the third point is that he has commanded us how to respond in those circumstances we're not to render evil for evil then he says in verse 30 give to everyone who begs from you brothers and sisters we are called not to withhold what we have from those who are in need and one who takes away our goods do not demand them back can I tell you brothers and sisters as I considered this in particular

I was reminded of situation just recently where I took someone to court and that individual owed me me and she was very very dishonest so dishonest and guess what I won the case but I didn't get it done and you know and I thought about it I mean the judge the judge didn't tell me that you know I was entitled to and I could have pursued it and I thought about that and I thought about this and I said you know what I could have lived without going back and forth to the court just to get a few thousand dollars I could have lived without that but I wanted so badly to prove a point

I didn't want to be taken to be seen to be taken advantage by anyone I was going to make an example of this person not only that I was determined as I said to her I'm going to help you I'm going to help you to live right listen not a die not a die but what we are being told in these verses is that we are a peculiar people we are different and we live not for this world but we live for the other world and we have to have in view not this world but rather the world that is to come Jesus says in verse 31 and as you wish that others would do to you you do to them that's our charge brothers and sisters do to others as we would wish them to do to us we would wish them to forgive us we would wish them to give us another chance we would wish them not to slander us when we are down and out we would wish them not to stomp on us brothers and sisters can I tell you what we don't do as believers

Jesus is telling us is that we don't in all of this because I'm saying this because vehemens like to say this we don't give people a piece of our minds can I tell you you know because we often say this listen I had to tell I can say him but I really mean her because it's normally women who say this I'm going to give her a piece of my mind we don't do that as believers at least we don't when I say that we don't do it yes perhaps we've done it but when we do it know that it's a sin know that we are not called to do that that's not who we are as believers we don't give people a piece of my mind of our minds nor do we ignore human suffering brothers and sisters what is to consider now having considered the command to be merciful what is to consider the reasons to be merciful that is to say why ought we be merciful why should we be merciful well apart from it being a command and that's reason enough what are the reasons we should be merciful and as

[29 : 41] I wrote that question so I consider that I imagine that many people present here like me would be able to respond in volumes with tears perhaps running from their eyes to the question why why should we be merciful as you consider that question here's what Jesus says in the primary verse that we're examining this morning Jesus says be merciful then he says even as your father is merciful even as your father is merciful but I want to suggest to us that in those few words we have two reasons why we ought to be merciful the first is that being merciful is in the believer's

DNA Jesus says even as your father is merciful even as your father is merciful so being merciful is in the believer's DNA it is what we do it is who we are Jesus says if you only love those who love you what benefit is that to you so there's nothing to that be merciful even as your father is merciful Christians believers are children of God and children resemble their parents and in this instance their father if our father is merciful then his children are to be merciful too that the logical path God is your father he is merciful and so as his child you ought to be merciful too scriptures tell us for the Lord your God is a merciful God and again we find these words blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ the father of mercies mercy brothers and sisters is part of God's character it's who he is and the children of God must reflect the character of their father

God enables through his spirit his children to be merciful God is our father and we are his children we ought to be like him and to be like him we ought to be merciful for he is merciful yes being merciful is due in part to our wills but what we are called to cannot be achieved not in growing it cannot be completely achieved except through the enablement of

God's Holy Spirit and when you and I when God chooses us when he enlightens us when he opens our eyes to the truth of who he is gives to us his Holy Spirit and his Holy Spirit dwells us and listen to what Paul writes to us in Galatians about the effect of the Holy Spirit indwelling us Galatians 5 verses 22 through 23 Paul writes but the fruit of the Spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self control against such things there is no law and although not specifically mentioned you don't see the word mercy there but

[35 : 38] I believe mercy is sufficiently encapsulated in the words kindness gentleness brothers and sisters those of us who are believers doubt with God's Holy Spirit we ought to have evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives we display God's mercy when we are merciful we demonstrate to the world that we are his children when we are merciful here's what Jesus says in this the second clause of this verse he says even as your father is merciful and here we find the second motivation for us to be merciful

God has been merciful to us Jesus says he has been merciful brothers and sisters you're motivated to be merciful because God has been merciful to us the greatest reason we show mercy is because God has shown mercy to us listen to what the scriptures tell us with God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in

Christ Jesus God who is rich in mercy he saved us because he is merciful he showered us with his mercy even when we were dead in our trespasses and again in Titus chapter three but when goodness and loving kindness of God our savior appeared he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit God is a merciful God and he saved us according to his own mercy brothers and sisters how many of you know that we deserve judgment you and I deserve judgment because God said the day we sin we will surely die we deserve judgment but God showed us mercy mercy he says in his word that he will be merciful towards our iniquities and will remember our sins no more that is why brothers and sisters you and I ought to be merciful our entire salvation is based on mercy you and I are standing sitting here today we are here today because of God's mercy imagine this the one who is all holy is merciful to us all sinful and he calls us to be merciful in our relationship with others who are just as unholy just as unrighteous as we are you see holy

God be merciful to us and he calls us to be merciful to those who are on our level the greatest example of God's mercy is Jesus Christ himself Jesus is the embodiment of God's mercy Jesus is the one who took on our sins he is the one who was punished for our unrighteousness!

[41 : 20] Jesus he showed mercy when he walked this earth when he healed the sick when he forgave sinners and certainly when he was crucified for your sin and mine yes brothers and sisters justice demanded your punishment and mine but Christ bore that punishment for us that is mercy beyond comprehension we've got a commander in chief as it were who not only issues instructions to us but he demonstrates how we ought to live and he did it in a way that we can't even imagine he set a pace for us but we can't even imagine brothers and sisters not only did you and I receive or experience mercy when he saved us the scriptures tell us about this mercy that we have this is what it says in lamentations three says that the steadfast love of the

Lord never ceases his mercies never come to an end guess what it goes on to say that his mercies they are new every morning great is your faithfulness brothers and sisters I believe that there are people present indeed I believe it's true of all of us that we can say that these words are true of us that the mercies of the Lord are new every morning to us and we are ever mindful as we wake up in the morning of the truth of the weight of these words when we not only when we think about the reality that we are awake and we are healthy but we have a fresh day to start and the thing that we thought would overwhelm us it didn't we made it through the mercies of the

Lord are new every morning last year this time you didn't think that you would make it as far as you have made it that relationship those financial issues that health condition mercies are new every morning and brothers and sisters can I tell you that even when you don't see the hand of the Lord that his hands are there his mercies never come to an end never come to an end and perhaps it is true that it is for you like it is for most if not all of us that all of your dreams and aspirations have not been realized but can I tell you something that his mercies his mercies never come to an end never come to an end they are new every morning they are new every morning brothers and sisters

I would encourage you to every single day of your life to ask the Lord to enable you to see your circumstance your situation through the grid of his sovereignty through the grid of his mercy and the grid of his love for you brothers and sisters his mercy has never come to an end they are new every morning great is the faithfulness of the God we serve who says to us be merciful for I am merciful but what is more what is even more than what we have said God extends his mercy to the just and to the unjust oh brothers and sisters we've got some unjust people in this world we've got some

people in this world who poke their fingers in

God's face and he doesn't swipe it off and you wonder sometimes you scratch your head and you say oh my goodness listen to what he say he's still here God's mercy brothers and sisters that's mercy he causes the rain and the sun to shine on the just and the unjust great is his faithfulness brothers and sisters we conclude this morning can I tell you and I know this is true of you too that if I had to choose between justice and mercy I choose mercy every time why am I saying this to us as [47 : 34] I conclude I'm saying this to us because when you go to the Lord in prayer brothers and sisters when you are on your knees in prayer your disposition ought to be Lord help me not because of what I have done not because I am a faithful servant Lord but because you are a merciful God I haven't been as I ought to be but you Lord you say that you are faithful to every generation mercy is in you every morning great is your faithfulness brothers and sisters can I encourage someone who is listening today to seek God's mercy and not his justice justice condemns you and I cannot stand before a holy

God we have no case none whatsoever there is sin that we have committed things that we have failed to do thoughts that we have brothers we're condemned already mercy says me give me mercy every day oh mercy mercy if you and I have received such mercy then we ought to show mercy we ought to delight in showing mercy we ought to leave this place today say Lord for the mercy that I have received enable me father to demonstrate the mercy that I have received be merciful even as you are merciful the children of a merciful father must become merciful people the greatest reason brothers and sisters we show mercy is because

God has shown mercy to us in a moment we got to sing a song that song some of the words that song 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 there are many his mercy is more his mercy is more praise the Lord his mercy is more stronger than darkness new every moment our sins there are many his mercy is more brothers and sisters when we sing songs like these let us remember that these are not mere words but this is truth that his mercy exceeds our sins let's pray father we thank you lord for the mercy that you grant to us even in this moment every day of our lives what our prayer is that we would indeed be your sons and your daughters lord is evidenced by the fact that we display mercy ourselves lord teach us to love our enemies teach us lord to be obedient to your word even when it hurts even when it's difficult even when we don't understand it fully forgive us for our disobedience oh lord cause faith to rise in our hearts for lord we know that we can only truly live this way if our dependence is on you so cause us oh lord to have hope in you father we pray for the one who's feeling hopeless we ask oh lord for those who are present who perhaps oh father is seeking mercy but lord has not but person perhaps lord has not been humble enough to approach others we pray oh lord that you would open eyes!

of those oh lord who need to seek the practical help from others lord to to do so to be humble we ask oh lord that you would grant to those who can help wisdom and ability and obedience to do so lord help help us we pray oh lord how grateful we are for this community that we are part of lord cause us to grow together as brothers and sisters until our lord returns in the name of jesus we pray amen amen