

Extraordinary Mercy

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Date: 20 June 2021

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[0 : 00] Today is 20th June, almost halfway through the year. Do you remember your New Year resolutions? Suppose you are on track and still keeping with them, congratulations.

But for some of us, you might say, what resolutions? I did not bother setting any because I knew I would not keep that damn for too long. I wonder how soon into the new years did you usually gave up on your resolutions?

We have been reading through the book of Exodus. The people of Israel were chosen by God to be rescued from slavery in Egypt.

God has a plan to bring them to a promised land, to live among them and for them to serve and worship Him. And ultimately to use them to bless the rest of His creations.

A couple of weeks ago, we joined them at the high point of their journey with God when they say resolutely in one voice in chapter 24, we will do everything the Lord has said we will obey.

[1 : 12] They resolved to enter into a confident relationship with God to worship Him exclusively. Today we are in chapter 32 and we came to a crisis point of their relationship with God because they have done it again.

They turned from their commitment and made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. We are present with a dilemma. Can a holy God live among sinful people?

Can a holy God live among them? Can a holy God live among them? Being God of righteousness and justice, He cannot turn a blind eye to sin.

And in His compassion and grace, He is always merciful and loving. So how is God going to balance justice and love? The end of chapter 24 indicates that after they declared allegiance to God, Moses, their leader, stayed up in the mountain for about 40 days, getting the details of how they should live with the holy God among them.

And in chapter 32, they created, the created, disrespect their creator, and made for themselves an idol. They turned their God's original plan for creation upside down.

[2 : 42] Again, by trying to be a creator. Only 40 days. And they say, Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain.

And they hassled Aaron, their assistant leader, to make them gods who will go before them. And when an idol in the shape of a calf was cast and fashioned, the people call it their God.

They have broken all of the three, first three commandments by their actions. Were they impatient to wait at the bottom of the mountains, wanting to settle in the promised land as soon as possible?

Last Sunday, James told us that the home God prepared for themselves was so magnificent and inviting. And back in chapter 29, we were told that Israel tends to force their way into whatever they wanted.

But there is something deeper, a deeper issue going on. And the issue is idolatry and sin. Charles Spurgeon, an English preacher in the late 18th century, said in one of his sermons, when we sin, it is taking God's mercy to leverage them upon his enemies.

[4 : 00] He points out that idolatry is people offering the riches given by God before the shrine of their greed. They prostitute the God-given talent to serve to the service of their ambitions.

God gives them judgment and they indulge in their advancement and seek not the interests of God's kingdom. God gives them influence and they use their influence to enlarge themselves and not for the honor of God.

James shared with me something from our very own brother, Damien, regarding idols, which is very profound and true. Damien said, people put their gold into their hearts and outcome their idols.

Idol worship is also an act of stupidity. In Psalm 106, verse 20, they exchanged the glorious God for an image of a bull which eat grass.

Paul says in Romans 1, 25, that humanity exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worship and serve created things rather than the creator.

[5 : 18] God lay out back in chapter 20 that they shall not have they shall not have God before him. They shall not make for themselves an image in the form of anything in heaven or on earth or in the water nor bow down to them or worship them and they shall not misuse the name of the Lord their God.

He explains that those who bow down and worship idols are the same as hatreds towards him and earning punishment for themselves and their children to the third and fourth generations and he will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses name.

but on the other hand in the same chapter it says that he shows mercy, he shows love to the thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

As their confident partner, God has all the right to demand the penalty of that breach of contract. He can call on the terms and being God and the creator of the whole world can make a new group of people and he told Moses in our chapter today, chapter 32, verse 9 to 10 of that intention.

I have seen these people, the Lord said to Moses, and they are a sneaked-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them.

[6 : 47] Then I will make you into a great nation. Great nation. However, he has confident himself to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel to make their offspring into a great nation and there are other contractual obligations that God has put himself into with his creations.

There is a fundamental tension between justice and mercy of God, especially when a group of people who are stubborn, rebellious, and evil.

God would be right to lay down his judgment on them and destroy them right there and then. Tim Chester said that when God said to Moses in verse 10, now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them, which may imply an invitation for Moses to intervene.

as he's saying, when you leave me alone, I will destroy your people, but if you don't leave me alone, then things might turn out very differently.

Moses did plead for the mercy for God's people by focusing on God's glory and God heed his prayer and relent, which changed history and present us with a mystery.

[8 : 13] elsewhere in the Bible taught us that God does not change his mind. So what happens when we pray? Will our prayer make a difference?

Tim Chester suggested that the best way to look at prayer is God intends our prayer to be how he changed the world. God invites Moses to share his compassion for his people.

We see in verse 19 that Moses burned with anger as God's anger burns against Aaron and Israel in verse 10. Verse 19 says, when Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

Even though he is all-powerful and all-knowing, God never works alone. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit created the world together.

They addressed sin and redeemed the world together. And God invites and allows his creation to work with him in showing compassion and mercy as well as exercising judgment and justice.

[9 : 32] What a privilege it is to be counted worthy as a fellow worker of God. How foolish of us if we give away this privilege by not living according to the creator order and exclude God from our lives, especially when we create for ourselves idols to worship.

when we live like we are the creator, we will end up like Israel, trying to create an image for the living God.

And we break our confident relationship with God and worship a lie. We are tearing apart our contract with God. We broke our promise like Moses broke the two tablets into pieces at the foot of the mountain.

our relationship with God scattered into pieces and their penalty to be paid due to the breach of contract. At that point, what Israel needed, what we needed as we break our relationship with God is an atonement for our actions.

Moses tried to be that atonement but before that, there is something he has to do in verse 25 to 26. Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies.

[11 : 00] So he stood at the entrance at the camp and said, whoever is for the Lord, come to me. And all the Levites rallied to him. He has called them to repentance.

He has to call to a stop of their foolishness and out of control worshiping. And that day, about 3,000 of the people died in the hands of the Levites.

They were set apart to the Lord, willing to stand on God's side. Instead of joining their fellow people in parting uncontrollably, they joined with God to exercise judgment on their brother, friend, and neighbor.

What is a gut reaction to their action? Is God being unfair? cruel in allowing 3,000 people killed that day?

We often expect God to have mercy, especially when we are the one facing with judgment. We want justice, just not for me. We often start our sentence about God by saying, well, because God is so-and-so, he should do so-and-so.

[12 : 14] I think God should be so-and-so. Or why didn't God do so-and-so? While we are accusing God of certain things, such as being unjust, have we stopped and consider how we are treating God?

Have we treated God justly? We often simplify and minimize the impact of our actions and our sin. Like Israel, we treat our confident relationship with God lightly.

As a result, we miscalculate and very misguided in our ability to repay our debt to God. We treat sin as if there are just one momentary slip-up.

We treat our commitment to God as if our new year resolution. We need great mercy, but we also often think that God is obliged to be merciful with us.

Have you ever got into a situation that you might have to ask for mercy? I did. About eight years ago, actually nine years now, the tax office charged me with wrongly claiming land tax exemption on some properties I own and forced witness of documents as a justice of peace.

[13 : 35] Sitting at court that day after pleading guilty, I still pray for God to do the impossible of granting me mercy and for the judge not to give me a criminal record.

It was a wishful thinking because God had dealt with me justly in addressing my pride that I thought I can manipulate some legal loopholes. people I wonder if I did not plead guilty and fought to keep my pride.

I most likely be sitting in a jail cell right now, still trying to clean my name by paying off some legal team instead of being here treasuring Jesus with you and seeing how God brought us together. Many people think they can buy mercy by hiring the legal team the best team they can buy or indeed there's still some country you can pay for mercy which is called a plea bargain hoping that the deal penalty will reduce or cancel however the debt incurred by our sin towards God will not just go away someone has to pay for it eventually God calls Israel to be his children and live out a life of following him in growing in confidence and reliance on him he calls them to worship him exclusively he also calls all his followers to do the same no matter where you are from and what ethnicity you are born into but instead of obeying and sticking to the proclamation of allegiance Israel seeked to create God for themselves and cause

God to burn with anger only 40 days after their resolutions so if you are a Christian a follower of Christ have your life been a joy and honor to God have you been causing God to burn with anger God could have purified the camp without Moses and the Levites however he revealed his intention to Moses and invite him to share in the manifestation of his mercy God worked through the Levites who ran against the sons and brothers when 3,000 of them did not repent and stopped their sinning today we are all pressured by society to give in and fit in to be part of the crowd or are you willing to stick with God and stand on God's side even if it means for you to go against your family and friends and relatives or have you been buckling under wanting to be liked and fit in and stay in the wrong crowd

[16 : 31] God shows love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments wouldn't you rather be on God's side when it comes to judgment time verse 30 to 32 told us that the next day Moses tried to atone the sin of the people by offering himself as a substitute you have committed a great sin but now I will go up to the Lord perhaps I can make atonement for your sin so Moses ran back to the Lord and say oh what a great sin these people have committed they have made themselves gods of gold but now please forgive their sin but if not then blot me out of the book you have written Moses offered his own life to secure God's forgiveness and at this moment he foreshadowed the person and work of Jesus Christ brilliantly

Israel had rejected

Moses yet he was willing to give himself for her God of course did not require this of Moses he forgives Israel's sin and Moses remained Israel leader but Moses offered upon us to Jesus like Moses Jesus was widely rejected by his people they had once worshipped him as the coming Messiah placing plant branches of victory in his path in his triumph entry into Jerusalem but they quickly turned against him and demand his crucifixion in the hands of Pontius Pilate upon the cross Jesus sown compassion on the very people that have demanded his crucifixion and in the end of Luke before his death Jesus cried out Father forgive them for they do not know what they do both Moses and Jesus were willing to give their life for the sins of God's people but the significant difference was that the offering that Jesus made was productive in all respects while Moses heart was in the right place and displaying the heart of a mediator Moses could not atone for the sins of God's chosen people because he lacks the required righteousness to satisfy God's holy standard in the account of Israel sins of adultery with the holy golden calf Moses makes his judgment and mercy in just the right proportion he is even willing to give himself to secure the protection of his people but of course what we witness he is Moses fulfilling his most tremendous role of typifying and foreshadowing Jesus and his work

God said towards the end of chapter 32 when the time comes for me to punish I will punish them for their sin this future pointing statement is fulfilled when God did what the Levites has done with their sons and brothers they killed 3,000 of their own sons and brothers to stop the people from carrying on in their God disgracing reverie in worshipping their idol and God killed his one and only son Jesus to redeem his people back to a right relationship with him so instead of punishing us for our sin he put the punishment on his son and himself God is always consistent with his actions and his requirement for us to follow him whatever standard he set for his people he also set for himself and in Jesus death and resurrection the righteous requirement and the love of

God are both fulfilled in the cross God is righteously loving and lovingly righteous towards his creation in the cross the sinless incarnate son of God atone for the sin of the creations and dealt with the crisis and dilemma of how a holy God can live among sinful human being Luke recorded in the beginning of the book of Acts that after Jesus' resurrection he spent 40 days with the apostles that he had chosen in Acts 1 chapter 1 verse 3 he said after his sufferings he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proof that he was alive he appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God he also told them that they would receive the Holy Spirit and speak boldly for God and this time God's chosen people did not forget what the [21 : 43] Lord had told them so they waited in prayer for the arrival of the Spirit then when the Spirit come to enable them they began to speak in many languages of those gathering with them proclaiming that God has made the crucified Jesus their Lord and Savior the people gathered were convicted by the message and responded to the call to repent and be baptized and furthermore they responded to the call to save themselves from this corrupt generation in in Acts 2 verse 41 told us those who accepted this message were baptized and about 3,000 were added to the number that day 3,000 people were put to death about 40 days after Israel said in one voice that they would obey whatever God has commanded them to do but failed to stop and repent of the blatant disobedience in worshipping idols they were sacrificed to bring the community back to a right worship of

God 3,000 people were saved about 40 days after Jesus resurrection when the Holy Spirit touches their heart with the message of God saving mercy in the cross of Jesus repented and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior saving themselves from the corrupt generation God had mixed God has made it possible for his holiness to draw a man sinner through the ruling sacrifice of Jesus his son by offering himself as a perfect atonement of our sin he has also made it possible for us sinners to worship him God would be right in laying out judgment on this world but he in his extraordinary mercy he punished his son instead how could us so