

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

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Date: 02 June 2019

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[0 : 0 0] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Luke chapter 10. We're going to continue our studies of the parables of Luke. So if you have a Bible, if you don't have a Bible and you need one, we have a bunch on the back table.

And we'd love to get you one so you can follow along with us. But Luke 10. Luke 10. You know, these parables are just stories about Jesus.

And stories have a way of affecting us like few other things. As a young age, stories just capture our attention and our imagination. There are a few things we wanted more as parents, Kim and I, than to get our kids reading.

And so we've read them many, many books. I bet you have as well. Some of the stories we started reading them when they were young are just silly nursery rhymes like Jack and Jill or Little Miss Muffet.

[1 : 1 0] Others take us to places unknown like Max and Where the Wild Things Are, which is one of my favorites. You know, others just capture our attention and become so well known that we can almost recite them together.

Like, Good Night Moon. I don't know how many times I read Good Night Moon to my kids. I bet we could recite Good Night Moon together this morning. But stories don't stop when we're old.

I mean, when we're young. And they don't just stay when we're young. They don't stop when we're old. Well, stories continue to affect our lives as we grow older, whether it's stories of success or failure, of hardship or overcoming obstacles, of historical events or future fantasy worlds.

You know, whether it's the stories told in Reader's Digest or on Lifetime, ESPN 3030, or just another movie based on a true story.

We cannot get enough because of how they make us feel, because of the ways they challenge the way we think about life. And it's precisely for this reason that the Bible is chock full of stories.

[2 : 2 1] It's really incredible that the Lord chose to reveal His plan for His people, not mostly through laws, but mostly through stories.

And this morning we come to one of the best, the story of the Good Samaritan. My prayer, our prayer, is that as we read, meditate, and mull over this story, that God would do it again and affect us.

And hearing His Word, we would be changed. So let's look down there in verse 25, Luke chapter 10, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus said to him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? And he answered, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your might and your neighbor as yourself.

[3 : 31] And he said, You've answered correctly. Do this and you will live. But the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

Jesus replied, A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now, by chance, a priest was coming down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So, likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an end and took care of him. And the next day, he took two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.

[4 : 48] Which of these, Jesus asked, do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? The lawyer said, The one who showed him mercy.

And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise. That is the Word of God, the only infallible, inerrant word we'll hear this morning.

You know, this story is commonly called the parable of the Good Samaritan, right? That's what's in our Bibles, or most of our Bibles, over the top of verse 25. And in many ways, rightly so.

He's the main character. Every story has a main character. Every story has a hero. Or most stories have a hero, and he's the hero. And so, we often conclude that the main point of this parable is to be a Good Samaritan.

Right? That's the way we read it, but I want to argue, ultimately I think the Scripture wants to argue, that is not ultimately what Jesus is trying to say.

[5 : 51] See, the story revolves around a conversation between Jesus and this lawyer. That's why we read from verse 25. We don't find this story isolated and on its own. It's captured in the midst of a conversation, in a context that's vital.

The lawyer comes to Jesus, and he's a man who studies the law of Moses, and he comes to Jesus trying to trick Jesus through his questions. Kind of like a preteen trying to use his parents against one another.

You're kind of like, what did your mom say? He's coming and trying to trick our Lord. He wants to trap him into saying what he wants Jesus to say.

You can see the conversation is carried along by questions. Look down there in verse 25. Teacher, what should I do to gain eternal life? Jesus asks questions back. Don't you just love people like that?

You ask for an answer, and they give you another question. Then he answers, and Jesus answers him. Verse 29, Jesus asks another question, or he asks Jesus another question.

[6 : 53] Then Jesus tells a story and concludes it with a question. The man answers, and then Jesus gives him a command. At first, he wants to prove that he knows the law better. So he's asking Jesus, what do you say about the law?

What do you say people have to do to earn eternal life? He's trying to stump Jesus and show how well he knows the law and ultimately how good he is.

Then when Jesus, they go back and forth, and they agree that you call to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. When he says, well, who is my neighbor?

You remember, he's trying to show how good he is. So essentially, he's saying, Jesus, let's be realistic. I know everyone can't be my neighbor. There's a world filled with tons of people.

Who really is it? And in asking who really is it, he's really asking who isn't my neighbor. And he thinks this is where I'll catch him.

[7 : 55] This is where I'll prove that I am good and righteous. But Jesus doesn't answer. He tells a story. And he concludes this story asking who was the neighbor.

Now, you come to this and we say, what's Jesus trying to do? Why doesn't he just answer the question? I think the point is, as several commentators helped me see, Jesus is trying to get the lawyer to give an answer very different than he would like.

And the story he tells does so brilliantly. Honestly, if we met this lawyer in the road and he asked us this very question, we would probably tell a story like this.

We would say, a Jewish man comes down from Jerusalem and finds a man lying on the road dying. This Jewish man that just left the temple, worshiping the Lord, he comes a bit closer.

He sees it's a Samaritan. Even though he hates Samaritans, he jumps off his animal, bandages his wounds, and helps him to safety. And then we would say, there you have it. You should love your enemies like this Jewish man loved a Pharisee, right?

[9 : 11] Now, if we told the story this way, the lawyer would most likely not be moved. Like other Jews, he hates Samaritans.

They are bitter enemies. They're like Florida Gator fans. Even worse. I don't know what could get worse. You know, he hates Samaritans because they do not follow God and they lead others astray.

We think racism is an issue in America. This racism is strong and intense and more deep-seated than anything we've ever experienced.

And so if the lawyer, if we heard him tell that story like that, where you're walking down the road, you should love that Samaritan. He would say, forget that. If I saw a Samaritan dead on the road or dying on the road, I'd finish him off.

So Jesus doesn't tell the story in that way. You got to hang with me for just a minute. He's far wiser. He reverses the expected roles.

[10 : 15] Instead of putting this Jewish man as the one walking down the road, doing the kindness to the Samaritan, he puts this Jewish man lying on the road.

Do you see? He says a Jewish man is lying on the road and dying. He's walking from worshiping in the temple in Jerusalem. He's walking down to Jericho. And this 17-mile trek was dangerous.

And the Jewish man found himself in a dark place where the robbers lurked, and they attacked him and beat him. He said three people came down the road. First a priest, then a Levite.

You know, and just when we expect another Jewish man to come down after a priest, Levite, another Jewish man is what you expect. Along comes a Samaritan. And what does the dying man want when he sees this Samaritan?

He wants help, right? He doesn't care who it is. He just needs help. Interestingly, when we're really in a jam, all our prejudices go out the window.

[11 : 20] And with this story, Jesus has cornered the lawyer. Do you see how different this is? He's calling the lawyer to answer Jesus' questions, not with who he would help, but who he would want to help him if he were in that place.

Do you see, if he was lying on the road, he would want help from anyone, even this Samaritan.

So Jesus asked, who was the neighbor? At the end, the lawyer reluctantly answers, the one who showed him mercy. He won't even mention his name.

Go and do likewise. I hope I'll continue to argue. The point of the parable is not merely to go out and be a good Samaritan. The point of the parable is to never lose sight of the mercy we've received.

The point of the parable is to place ourselves, not walking down the road, but dead on the side of the road. To consider where we'd be had God not stopped. Scanning our life and considering what we deserve and what we've received, it's as if Jesus is questioning us this morning.

[12 : 28] Now, friend, who was a neighbor to you? To which we must answer. My enemy. The one I've offended. The Lord.

And Jesus replies, go and show mercy as freely as you've received it. If you have received mercy, in a word, give mercy freely away.

That's what this parable is trying to drive us to do. If you've received mercy, give mercy freely away. There's so much here. Tim Gallagher wrote a whole book on this one parable, applying it to our context.

I only have a few moments to unpack a few things from this precious parable, but let's give it a shot. First point, mercy is always active. Mercy is always active.

You know, mercy is one of those words we just kind of throw around in the church. It's a Christian word. But what really is mercy? Is mercy just that peaceful, easygoing feeling, right?

[13 : 36] Is it just not being so uptight? Not being so focused on the rules. You know, we appeal to someone for mercy. Hey, give me mercy, man. I was 10 minutes late. We appeal to that.

We just want them to throw out the rules for a minute. Is that mercy? Or maybe mercy is just that deep feeling kindness or pity. You know, is a merciful person just somebody who has big feelings?

You know who I'm talking about. The one who feels everyone's pain and makes you feel warm and fuzzy when you talk to them. The person who feels deeply the challenge and obstacles of others.

Is that mercy? Those people are great, but that may not be mercy. According to our text, one of the old guys defines it this way.

Grace is especially associated with men in their sin. Mercy is especially associated with men there in their misery.

[14 : 43] So he's trying to define the difference between them. Grace is associated with men in their sins, and mercy is associated with men in their misery. The idea is that grace sees the problem of sin as a whole, but mercy sees the miserable consequences of sin.

And biblically, mercy always works to relieve those consequences. One of the best definitions I found this week is from Martin Lloyd-Jones, who says, Mercy is pity plus action.

That's so well stated. Mercy is pity plus action. Now, we don't use the word pity in the same way he's using it. Essentially what he's saying is compassion. It's overflowing compassion and kindness plus action.

Mercy always includes action. That's what we see throughout this parable. If you look down in verse 31, you know, you see the priest comes down the road, and when he saw, he didn't act.

Verse 32, the Levite comes down the road, and he saw. He went to the other side of the road. But the lawyer says, the Samaritan is the one who showed mercy.

[15 : 54] And it says he showed mercy in six acts. He went to him. He bound his wound. He poured oil and wine. He set him on his own animal.

He brought him to the end. He took care of all his bills there. He acted. And so Jesus very obviously and very pointedly says, at the end, go and do likewise.

Do it. Mercy that is just felt is not mercy. That's what he's trying to say. Mercy is not being easygoing or relaxed or overlooking or sweeping something under the rug.

And mercy is not dismissive of what is right according to the law. Mercy is devoted to righteousness in doing what is right. That's what Jesus says when he says, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

I desire not just the warm, fuzzy, and fleeting feelings of worship. I desire real, concrete acts of mercy.

[16 : 57] That's why 1 John says it like this. Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth. James 2 says, mercy triumphs over judgment.

What good is it, my brothers? If someone says he has faith but does not have works, can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of them says to him, go in peace, be warmed and filled, without acting, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Mercy is not a sidebar issue for the Christian life. It's not an optional add-on. Faith without works is dead.

So too concrete acts of mercy reveal saving faith. Earlier this week, some of you may have read an article in our daily post, Athenian.

The author was writing in response to some of the heavily backed abortion bans, or bills that are going through trying to ban abortion in states, in our country.

[18 : 13] This author seems clearly supportive of abortion and women's right, as she defines them. And I imagine we disagree on a lot of things. However, according to the article, one thing we agree on.

It's not enough for Christians to back a bill. It's not enough to shout down abortion centers and wave our flag.

She writes, we don't get to declare life that begins at conception and then tap out when life begins to have real needs, wants, and desires. If this is true, if this parable is true, we must be opposed to tapping out when mercy moves to action.

Our mercy must put on boots and gloves and get dirty. Our mercy must move us out of our holy huddles and into a community that's not holy, such that we take up real-time mercy work.

If we as a church succeed in growing to be more like Christ, but our presence and reputation for good works in this community do not similarly grow, we fail. Point two, mercy resists limitations.

[19 : 47] One of the main things Jesus is wanting to do in this parable is to unlimit mercy. Jesus wants our mercy to be unprejudiced, uncareful, unshrewd, unlimited.

You know, the lawyer's asking, who is my neighbor? And he's really asking, who isn't my neighbor? And our mercy always wants to know the limits, right? We're always gauging how much is left in the tank.

And that's what comes out in this parable. The priest and the Levite limit mercy by the law. Jesus loves the law, so do these guys. Wealthy priest comes along.

First, he sees the wounded man. He wants to do what's right. Now, we're not supposed to read this as if this guy's just a total dirtbag. No, he's a priest. He wants to do what's right.

He's fearful, though, that this wounded man is dead or about to die. And if he touches this dead man, he'll be unclean. And his whole family will be unclean when he returns home.

[20 : 48] And so they had to go and be purified again. And so he walks on the other side of the road to keep from getting unclean by this man.

And then a Levite comes after him. A Levite's just an assistant to the priest. He likely realizes that since the priest didn't stop, he gets out too, right? It's kind of like a get-out-of-jail-free card that sometimes we can feel in our conscience when we see someone who we respect not do something.

We take the pass too. He too avoids the possibility of being unclean and walks on the other side of the road and avoids the wounded man.

So they were focused on obeying the law and too focused on not becoming unclean. Or perhaps there's another element here. Perhaps they just had important things to do.

You know, they're important people. They're priests. And Levites, they're part of a selected group that serve the Lord. And these men, they've been serving the temple probably for two weeks. And they had done their rotation.

[21 : 55] And they were finally able to come home to their families. And they don't have time to be stopped by this wounded man. They've been serving the Lord. Right? They're church people. They have a schedule to keep of important things of serving the Lord.

And yet, as Jesus warned, in doing God's important work in obeying the law, they failed to see that the weightier matters of the law are justice and mercy and faithfulness.

This question, I mean, this parable begs the question, do we limit mercy? Do we limit it to the tidy moments that fit into our schedule?

You know, I'm a great Christian when I can plan on it. I'm so merciful and kind when I allot time and schedule it.

Do we limit mercy to gifting? You know, do we leave it to the ones who have a desire for it? Well, that's kind of their thing. I'm just going to let them run with it. Let's let Luke go to India.

[22 : 58] You know, let's let those gifted. You know, if I went to India, I'd just be so awkward and uncomfortable. In fact, the only missionaries in the Alexander family are two of my Spencer great-aunts who went to India.

They decided it was too dirty to be on the mission field there. So there you have it. We limited mercy. Although they did give me some incredible books, but that's another story.

Because they did know their theology, just not their methodology, I guess. But do we limit it in that way, you know? That's just somebody who's really into that thing, right?

Or do we limit mercy to those who are really needy? You know, find me an orphan or a widow, and I have mercy. I'm ready to jump in, help.

I'll use my own money. But find me somebody who's made a bunch of bad decisions. I can't help. Those are just the consequences of bad choices, refusing to work, refusing to take personal responsibility.

[24 : 08] So I'm just leaving them. But mercy always sets out to relieve consequences. We can't limit mercy to those we call needy.

Or do we limit it to those we know and love? You know, there's kind of almost an implicit contract that we have with people when we invite them over or when we give them something nice. It's an implicit contract that if I'm nice to you, you be nice back to me.

And we have this nice little thing going on. But is that the point? Is that what the good Samaritans are after? We have a little club that we're nice to people in this club, but not to anyone else. It cannot be.

Our Lord says, if you love those who love you, what is the benefit to you? Or do we limit mercy to a certain race? Are we willing to help somebody unlike us?

If we see someone stranded on the side of the road, who are we most likely to stop for? A white woman or a black man? Is our mercy racist?

[25 : 11] The point he's trying to get at is mercy must be unlimited. If it's limited, it's not mercy. It's strategy. It's code calculation.

It's an investment. We must stop limiting mercy is what he's trying to get at. We can't limit it to our schedules or our determinations of who really needs it or our chosen race. If we want to pursue the mercy that's found in these scriptures, we must keep it unlimited, completely unlimited.

And this parable ought to fillet all of us because our mercy is limited in so many ways. The only limit to mercy is mercy.

So we think, well, how does this work? I get that as an overarching principle.

How does this work? Jesus uncovers how mercy works by calling us to love our neighbor as their self. That's meant to be the scope of our mercy.

[26 : 20] The whole parable is trying to unpack that command. How do you love your neighbor? As yourself.

Now, like you, that's something I know how to do. I'm very skilled at loving myself, you know. I excel at it. One of the ways my love for myself is most often revealed is through food.

You see, my wife makes these unbelievable Vietnamese egg rolls. Yeah, these egg rolls are delicious.

They're like candy. And so when she makes these egg rolls, because they're so time consuming, she just makes a massive batch of egg rolls.

And these just blow everything you've ever tasted out of the water. So don't even get any ideas here. Yeah, the first night is like heaven. I get to eat as many egg rolls as I want.

[27 : 29] It is pure delight. I resist any nudge to count my calories or control my portion. But after that night, the game is on.

Because it's evident to all in the house that there is now a limited supply. Kim will not be frying egg rolls tomorrow.

I'll probably have to wait weeks or months or years. And the supply will only dwindle. And my goal in life rapidly changes because my goal becomes to eat as many egg rolls as possible until the supply is gone.

You know, I've been known to slip in there about 11 o'clock and eat a few out of the fridge just to get a leg up on the competition while they're asleep. You know, I've counted egg rolls before going to work to make sure no one exceeds their portion limits.

I've been tempted to stash them and have actually done it, if I'm honest, in hidden places in the fridge. I love myself, and so I love these egg rolls.

[28 : 42] You've got to try them, but it's not going to happen because I will not share with you. It's so easy for me to love myself.

The point Jesus is not making right there is not make sure you love yourself. The point he's trying to make is that loving yourself is like falling off a log.

So think on that, and you'll learn how to love others. It goes as far as love goes to do good and relieve the consequences of sin.

The only limit to mercy is that which is unloving. The only limit to mercy is mercy. It goes as far as love goes to do good.

And so mercy should only be limited when people essentially refuse it by abusing it. Point three, mercy overflows from a stunned, mercy-stunned heart.

[29 : 50] Mercy overflows from a mercy-stunned heart. As I pointed out, the ultimate trap comes not upon Jesus but upon the lawyer.

He tries to trick Jesus by his questions, but Jesus turns the tables and tricks him. He forces the lawyer to admit that the hated Samaritan is the one who is merciful.

And in so doing, Jesus forces him to see that he is the one who received mercy. If you think about this, this is incredible. Jesus doesn't tell the story as we would. We tell stories of those who are in need of mercy, and we urge folks to be merciful and generous just to make them feel guilty, and it never ultimately works.

And Jesus doesn't tell a story like that. You know, mercy that's forced is not mercy. Jesus corners the lawyer not to make him feel guilty, but to open his eyes to see he's the one who's shown mercy.

Here's the point. Only mercy produces mercy. Only mercy produces mercy. I'll unpack what that means, but that's what Jesus means in the Beatitude when he says, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

[31 : 11] Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. The point's not that we show mercy in order to receive it. That would undo the basis of the gospel. The point is to show mercy because we have.

What we need to know in order to fill our lives with real concrete acts of mercy and to ensure that our mercy is unlimited is not knowing more needs or more statistics or more opportunities.

What we need to know more and more and more in order to fill our lives with mercy that acts is the mercy we've received. It's incredible. That's what Jesus plants his parable down on.

When we see ourselves rightly, we realize that we are that wounded man dying on the road. It's worse than that, though. When we see ourselves rightly, we realize we have no righteousness of our own.

We're not good people. With a few bad quirks face to face with the Lord, we realize we're helpless. We can do nothing. It breaks our heart. If we see this, it breaks our hearts.

[32 : 14] We long to be free. We weep. Just like Chris led us a few minutes ago. We long to throw off the guilt. We have come to see that our greatest enemy doesn't know nearly how bad it is.

We come to see there's nothing we can do about it. The righteousness we need, we cannot create or produce or manufacture. We need God to change us and make us new.

If we don't see this, we lie and die. If we have a problem with the mercy in our life and we have begrudging mercy in our life, it's because we don't understand this.

That's the key to the parable and the key to life. That's what changes everything. That's the gospel. That the wages of sin is death.

But the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. All have gone astray, each to his own way. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of his all.

[33 : 23] And so Jesus is preaching the gospel to this man. He's wanting the gospel or the lawyer to see what the gospel is. He wants us to see that mercy is not an optional add-on. It's an overflow of a new heart.

Of a mercy-stunned heart. It's what happens when a sinner's heart is overwhelmed and made new by mercy. John Piper says it like this.

The mercy that God blesses is itself the blessing of God. It grows up like fruit in a broken heart, a meek spirit, and a soul that hungers and thirsts for God to be merciful.

Mercy comes from mercy. Our mercy to each other comes from God's mercy to us. Jesus doesn't want us to be good Samaritans.

He wants us to be stunned by mercy. If we could take this one step further, mercy given is what melts other hearts with mercy.

[34 : 46] No one is ever stunned by shrewd generosity. No one's ever humbled by forced acts of service.

But time and again, stories are told of people taken aback by undeserved acts of mercy, whether it's the kindness extended to a discouraged spouse or forgiveness of a victim extended to a perpetrator.

And once we get a taste of it, we can't stop telling it. I recently read this story that made me think of the way mercy often functions.

It's a story about Georgetown University students. The author writes, every night they had the same routine. The Georgetown University business student would settle in for his cram session with soda, chips, and books lined up.

You know, we line up all those things in our battle station before we get started. And this janitor would come in to start the night shift, polishing each of the windows in the study room, moving amidst all the books and chips and sodas, invisible.

[36 : 08] He says, there was this space like ice separating us, the janitor said. The janitor worked around the students for nearly a decade before one of them finally broke that ice.

A nod one night. A hello the next. And within weeks, this janitor and this student were having long talks.

He even went with the janitor to church and met his six-year-old daughter. After they formed a bond with this once invisible worker, he couldn't stop noticing the others.

He said, once you see it, you can't unsee it. Once you see it, you can't unsee it.

Once your heart's been changed by mercy, you can't unsee it in the lives of others. And this guy, he kind of led this group of Georgetown University students to see more need in those around him.

[37 : 12] One janitor wanted to open a catering business, so they raised \$2,500 for that. Another cashier wanted to go visit his family in the Sudan. After 45 years, they raised \$5,000 for this guy to go to the Sudan, and they've done much more.

And I think in so many ways, that illustrates what mercy's meant to do in our lives, is that once we see the mercy we've received, we can't unsee the opportunity for mercy around us.

And so we jump at opportunities to show mercy through concrete acts. If we've received mercy, then we should give it freely away.

Let me just end with a couple thoughts. I think in so many ways, I kind of don't want to apply this parable, because Jesus doesn't really.

There's other passages that get into mercy, ministry, and compassion, and all that that means. I think he wants us more than anything else to be stunned by mercy.

[38 : 21] And the details will work itself out. A couple things, though. I guess I just said I don't want to apply, but I am going to apply, so that's the conflict within me.

First is mercy begins at home. Scripture says, whoever doesn't provide for his family is worse than an unbeliever. Remember, mercy begins there, obviously financially, but in so many other ways.

You know, some of the people we live with and are closest with receive the least of our mercy. That ought not be. Second, mercy extends to our personal relationships.

Mercy flows, not most freely, but perhaps most quickly, to those we partner with in the church. Paul says, do good to everyone, especially those of the household of faith.

Thirdly, mercy extends into our community through planned and unplanned acts of service. And they happen all around us. I was writing this message Friday afternoon, and the lady's car broke down outside, and she knocked on the door.

[39 : 45] And I had the opportunity to push her back. And I was typing this message, and my heart was a little softer to respond rightly. I'm not trying to prop myself up in any way. Just knew the conviction was going to be severe if I did not.

But how can we make the problems of others our own? Their problem's not your problem until you make it your problem.

What about this community? I think in so many ways, we're just starting as a church, and one of my burdens is that we'd find ways in which we carry the concerns of this community.

Like I said, if we stay here and we just prosper, and Athens does not, we lose. Not that we want Athens to prosper economically in ways that would not serve it, but we do lose if we don't take up the problems of this city.

So help us, and let us live this way. If you've received mercy, give mercy freely away. It's so hard, isn't it?

[41 : 02] Praise God, one day, the reluctance in our heart will no longer be there. But until it's gone, we want to endeavor to kill it by giving mercy away again and again, entrusting God and giving it away.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for mercy. We thank you that you who knew no sin became sin so that in him, in Jesus, we might become the righteousness of God.

Lord, we thank you. Lord, in so many ways, our lives are not defined by our great accomplishments, but they're marked and defined by mercy.

The greatest moments of our life are not ones we perform, but ones performed on us by mercy. We give you thanks and praise. We worship you.

Lord, we humble ourselves before you. I do pray that you would guard our hearts, guide our hearts, convict our hearts where appropriate, that we might live merciful lives, lives devoted to action, lives unlimited, and lives continually stunned by the mercy we enjoy in Jesus.

[42 : 27] We give you thanks and praise. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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