

Sermon Guide: Mercy | Edith Rae | Nov. 5, 2023

Edith's message begins with the story of Jean Valjean from "Les Misérables," whose life is transformed by an act of mercy from Bishop Myriel. That act serves to highlight the outrageous, undeserved, and unexpected nature of mercy.

In a merit-based world of payback and keeping score, a focus on mercy comes as a refreshing call to embody the grace we have been so freely given. Drawing from a wealth of scripture, especially the parable of the unmerciful servant, Edith underscores the gravity of God's mercy towards us—a mercy so vast that it forgives debts we could never repay, for, as Tim Keller put so aptly: "we are more sinful than we dare admit, yet more accepted and loved by Jesus than we can imagine."

Edith then turns to the practical application of mercy in our daily lives, urging hearers to daily extend kindness, patience, and forgiveness in a broken world. A Christian life adorned with mercy is one that actively seeks reconciliation, refrains from gossip, and shows patience.

Edith also addresses the intersection of justice and mercy, explaining that God's mercy does not negate His justice. On the cross, God acts with perfect justice and mercy, taking upon Himself the punishment we deserve while offering us forgiveness. Edith challenges hearers to extend this same mercy to others, even in the face of sin, reflecting God's love and compassion.

Key Takeaways:

- Mercy is an active choice to extend compassion and forgiveness, even when judgment is deserved. It is a reflection of God's character, who consistently chooses to withhold punishment and offer grace instead. This divine attribute is not only to be admired but also to be emulated in our interactions with others, as we have been forgiven much more than we will ever be asked to forgive. ([49:33])
- The practice of mercy involves tangible actions such as reconciliation, patience, and kindness, which are not merely suggestions but commands that reflect the heart of God. As Christians, we are to clothe ourselves with these virtues, becoming visible representatives of Jesus in a world that desperately needs to see His love in action. ([49:33])
- When we hoard God's mercy, we stagnate spiritually, but when we allow it to flow through us, we bring life and blessing to others. Our calling is to be conduits of God's mercy, actively seeking ways to demonstrate His love and grace in a world that often operates on the principles of retribution and revenge. ([49:33])

Discussion Questions

1. What attributes of God are highlighted in Exodus 34:6-7, and how do they relate to the concept of mercy?
2. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), what is the response of the king to the servant's plea for mercy, and what does this reveal about expectations of forgiveness?
3. In light of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, what might be the consequences of receiving mercy but failing to offer it to others?

Application Questions

1. Identify a situation in the past week where you found it challenging to extend mercy. What steps can you take to show mercy in similar situations moving forward?
2. Think of a relationship that may benefit from an act of mercy, such as forgiveness or patience. What is one concrete action you can take this week to demonstrate mercy in that relationship?
3. Recall a time when you experienced mercy from someone else. How did that impact you, and how can you pay it forward to someone in your community this week?