



**Home : Sermons : October 15, 2006**

## **A Kingdom of Mercy – *Luke 17:1-19***

**Introduction** – In order to tie all of this material together, I would sum all of Jesus' teaching with His heart-felt warning: Do not turn into Pharisees; do not take on the arrogant attitude of the Pharisees. Never, ever get over the mercy of God.

**Make Way for God's Vengeance** (vv1-2) – Jesus has promised that there will be stumbling blocks that will come upon the new church, this band of disciples (John 15:20). But with eyes set upon Jerusalem and the coming judgment, Jesus warns that a great woe is coming upon those who would persecute this new band. Make way for God's vengeance (Rom 12:17-21). This means that Jesus' followers are required to have a unique mindset towards their enemies.

**Take on God's Forgiving Spirit** (vv3-4) – We are not to stand at a distance from a sinner (like the elder brother in the parable of the lost son). We are to actively seek his or her restoration (Gal 6:1-3). Humble obedience means going to correct and even rebuke a brother or sister. Even harder, it means having a spirit of forgiveness rather than the fleshly attitude of bearing a grudge.

**Mercy-Givers** – This is the opposite of the spirit of the Pharisees and is to characterize us, the followers of Jesus. We are the elect of God and therefore, we are to walk as such, looking like Jesus (Col 3:12-13). "*Mercy triumphs over judgment*," James writes (2:13) and if mercy has triumphed over us, then mercy rules. This is why we pray that God would forgive our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. We are swimming in an ocean of mercy. It is the year of Jubilee. The debts are all forgiven.

**Faith and Faithfulness: A Simple Duty** (vv5-10) – As it seems impossible to us, so it seemed impossible to the apostles. "*Increase our faith*," they cried. Jesus uses a simple example to show them that it is not the quantity of faith that matters, but rather the object of one's faith. It is not about having more "faith," in some kind of ethereal way. It is about believing Jesus, trusting in Jesus, trusting in His promises, and out of that, remaining loyal to Him regardless of how many times one has to humble oneself and serve another.

And when we do this, we shouldn't expect some reward. We are not out-mercy-ing God. We can never outdo His mercy. When we imitate our Master in service, we have only done what was required of us. Faithfulness may render rewards, for God is merciful, but it never places God in our debt.

**Overwhelmed by Mercy** (vv11-19) – This story Luke records is not a parable. Remember: this really happened! However, there is a chronological problem, it seems, here. Luke may be recalling chronologically what had happened before, in Samaria, to make the point that this Samaritan leper understood the overwhelming grace and mercy of God given to him. This was quite in contrast to the other nine lepers, presumably Jews and representative of the Pharisees who thought that God owed them something.

The other lepers never return to Jesus. The Samaritan comes to the true Temple of God and the true Priest of God and finds everlasting life for his soul. He was already healed and yet Jesus said, "*your faith has made you well*." The text never says anything about the leper believing or trusting Jesus, but instead shows what faith looks like and how a man with faith acts. Faith brings forth repentance, turning around and back to Jesus. Faith results in glorifying God with a loud voice. Faith falls prostrate before Jesus in humility and thanks.

**Looking Like a Leper** – Never, ever get over the mercy of God. Never cease being completely dependent on the mercy of God. The salvation you have is mercy. The blessings you have received, every one of them, are mercy. The trials God gives are all to display His mercy. You are surrounded in mercy. And the smallest mustard seed of faith brings forth the tree-moving power of God's mercy.

**God Gives What He Commands** – Never forget that God always gives what He commands (Phil 2:12-13, Gal 5:22-23). When we are required to be humble, we remember that Christ humbled Himself unto death on a cross. When we are required to be faithful, we remember that Christ was obedient to His Father in everything. When we are required to be merciful, we remember that we are swimming in an ocean of mercy. And when we are commanded to be thankful, we remember all these

things again and again.

*Dave Hatcher – October 15, 2006*

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