

Mercy – Part 2

(Teaching given by Tien Nguyen at Kingdom Living Community, Canberra on 8-1-2017)

Throughout the Bible, whether it is in the Old or the New Testament, the Mercy of God is powerfully displayed:

- **For the Lord your God is merciful—He will not abandon you nor destroy you nor forget the promises He has made to your ancestors.** (Deuteronomy 4:31)
- **Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for He is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.** (Luke 6:35-36).

In another version of the Bible, verse 36 is also written: “**Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful**”.

God expects us to be merciful. Why?

- **Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.** (Matthew 5:7)
- **With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless.** (Psalm 18:25 ESV)

1 Corinthians 13 verses 4-7 talks about love: **Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.**

To love someone with that kind of love means to consistently will myself to see the good in the other person because that is how God loves us. For us, to love someone like that, we have to have a lot of mercy in us.

On the other hand, mercy means to choose to see the good in those who are ‘unthankful’, and do evil and wicked things...

Are we expected to love everyone in this world like that? Apparently so.

In Matthew 22:37-40, when one of the Pharisees lawyer asked Jesus, “Sir, which is the most important command in the laws of Moses?” He replied, ‘**Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.**’ This is the first and greatest commandment. The second most important is similar: ‘**Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself.**’ All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets stem from these two laws and are fulfilled if you obey them. **Keep only these and you will find that you are obeying all the others.**’

The two most important things in our lives as Christians, according to Jesus, are to love God and to love others as we love ourselves. We are to love others as God loves us. And to love others as He loves us, we need to be merciful.

We are saved by His love and born of God, therefore, we have His nature. God doesn’t have love – He is love. And because we have His nature, we are love. He loves us with His *agape* love, therefore, we are to love others with *agape* love. Although we have God’s new nature, this *agape* love needs to be cultivated in us.

To cultivate this love nature in us, we need to be merciful as He is merciful to us. **‘Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful’.**¹

1 – Luke 6:36

Love is the most powerful weapon, but without mercy it is not possible. As I mentioned earlier, mercy means to choose to see the good in those who are bad. I have to be willing to see the good in the other person, even if that person has done bad things.

When the American lady whom I met for the first time outside my children's school, asked me to forgive the American people and the American Vietnam War veterans for what they did to my country, I forgave them.

Some years later, I met some of the Christian Australian Vietnam War veterans at a special gathering. Some of them, after realising that I came from Vietnam, came up to me to confess the things they did in Vietnam that they considered bad and asked for my forgiveness. They asked to be forgiven for unkind words, a wrong heart attitude and prideful thinking towards Vietnamese people, as well as other terrible things they did to the Vietnamese people while they were fighting in Vietnam. I heard some horrific and also some very sad stories.

Because my life had been radically changed by God's mercy, I was able to willingly forgive them. For me, it was a joy to see them set free from their torment, whether what they did was self-inflicted or externally inflicted. Just like God had set me free, I wanted to see them free from the torment of shame, guilt, self-condemnation, and 'self-unforgiveness'. When I saw the relieved look on their faces when they knew that they were forgiven, I was so moved.

The enemy of our soul hates, and also fears, the power of *agape* love and the power of mercy.

Mercy needs to come from God, because it is pure and simple, without personal agendas. And yet, filled with power to heal, transform, redeem, and reconcile; bring back to life what was dead; restore what was lost; and make beautiful what was decimated.

Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee of Pharisees. We encounter Saul for the first time in the Bible in the book of Acts when he oversaw the brutal death of Stephen. He wanted to snuff out the early church. He was powerful and feared.

The day came when mercy touched Saul's life. Mercy didn't judge nor accuse nor condemn him. Mercy transformed Saul into Paul, who then devoted his life to preach, teach, write and witness God's love and mercy.

Even before we were born, God extended His mercy to us. He extended His mercy to us before we confessed our sins. The creation of the world is also an act of mercy from Him. He created everything around us for our enjoyment.

God never gave up on us. He never turned away from us, even when He knew we were sinners. Instead, He sent Jesus as a sin-sacrifice; He laid on Him our iniquities. We need to let undeserving people know that God loves them and His mercy is for them. Mercy is an undeserved favour. Mercy is when we don't get what we rightly deserve. Everyone needs mercy. Because of His mercy, we are able to show people mercy. **Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.** We can't love the way 1 Corinthians 13 teaches us, unless we have mercy in our heart.

I came into my marriage with Wayne with a lot of flaws and baggage, so our marriage for many years was very difficult. Besides needing God's mercy, I also needed Wayne's mercy. I'm very grateful to God for saving my marriage, and I'm also very grateful to Wayne for his mercy which is in the form of compassion and forbearance towards me.

Matthew 9:13 says, **'Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'** For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.' Jesus was saying this to the Pharisees because they criticised Him for His constant association with the unwanted in society. He told them that He came for sinners, not for

those who already thought that they were righteous. The Pharisees thought that their works were a sufficient sacrifice to God, and that they would please God. But God would rather us be merciful.

Is it correct to say that His mercy saved us? We'd rather say that it's His love that saved us because it is hard for us to admit that we are sinners and that we truly don't deserve His mercy. That's because mercy looks beyond shame, condemnation, guilt, impurities, sin, fear, failures, selfishness, etc.

Mercy is not free. Mercy costs God. We read in Isaiah 53:5-6, **'But He was wounded and bruised for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace; He was lashed—and we were healed! We—every one of us—have strayed away like sheep! We, who left God's paths to follow our own. Yet God laid on Him the guilt and sins of every one of us!'**

Therefore, it is because of His mercy that we were saved. Let mercy lead us to the undeserving, broken, lost and sin-stricken people, as well as the poverty-stricken and war-stricken places.

(to be continued)

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