

# Mercy – Introduction

*(Transcript of teaching by Tien Nguyen at Kingdom Living Community, Canberra on 18-12-2016)*

When I was asked to do this teaching I was quite shocked because I realised it's a big topic. Many things I learnt about mercy are what I sensed God telling me so I just did what He asked me. I have never kept any notes, however, when I applied what He asked me to do, I experienced many stories of redemption. And for myself, I found the real me, as well as freedom and deliverance. I consider that mercy must be one of the characters of believers, part of our new nature in Christ.

But I must say that while I prepared this, I was very challenged last week in the area of mercy, and I asked myself, 'Where is my mercy?' It seemed like I didn't have any to give out. I was very caught up with my rights. So this morning when I got up early to rewrite my talk, I said to God, 'Father, I have failed you in this area, I realised I'm not qualified to talk about mercy.' I felt terrible. His reply to me was, 'No, it's not a failure, it's a journey. It's a big thing, and I have taught you some, but you need to know more, because there is a lot more about mercy that my people need to know in this season.' Then He gave me a word. He said, 'Part of alignment in this season is that you must understand mercy.' Not many people understand mercy because the word 'mercy' implies that we have done something wrong and someone has to pardon us. So it's bad, it makes us look bad.

Grace can be defined as, God gives us something we don't deserve. A part of grace is, 'Oh, He loves me so much. He gives me all these things. I'm great.' But mercy means that we have done something wrong. Many times the Lord showed me that I am the one who needs to change. I remember the day I gave my life to Jesus. I prayed the sinner's prayer, and when I felt His love in me, I felt alive and I felt great. I looked at God as my friend, as if we were equal. Gradually over 20 years of being a Christian, He is now in His rightful place in my life. Now, He is God in my life. And every time when I think of God's mercy, I get very teary, because I realise I'm a sinner and His mercy has kept me from getting what I rightfully deserve. I don't know all my thoughts and motives but God knows them all. He really humbles me, and part of mercy is to walk humbly.

The Bible talks so much about God lifting up the humble. Many believers think, 'I'm not good for God' – but that's not humility. Humility is about knowing that we are undone, without Him we are nothing but in Him we can do all things, and that is what He did in us when He showed us mercy. I'm completely undone before God. I've got nothing good to say. The Bible says in Isaiah 64 that our righteousness is like filthy rags. Before I used to read that verse without fully understanding, but now I understand what it means. All the good and great things I've done are no longer a big deal to me. As long as today I walk right with God, that I live true to what He calls me to be, and really be merciful and loving to those people around me. These are the thing that I want to achieve day to day, because it means that all is well between me and Him. And even if I didn't do anything, I know that God still loves me. And I know He will say, 'I will love you anyway.' It's true, it's true.

You know, our human nature is that we tend to be so hard on ourselves because the voice inside us continues to tell us that we are not good enough. If we listen to those voices long enough, we get separated from God. It is not because of Him, but we automatically distance ourselves from Him because we think we are unclean. Humility requires us to acknowledge that, 'I'm not good, Lord. I'm only good because of who You are in me. I can love because you are God in me'.

Some time ago, after I got saved, I resigned from my work and decided to take a teaching job that God gave me. I wasn't a qualified teacher, but I knew He gave me that job because He opened doors, so many doors for me to walk in and be a teacher. So obviously I had to lean on Him to know what I had to do. He gave me favour, but it didn't mean that I just walked in and fluffed around. I had to let God teach me how to teach.

There was one particular supervisor, she was really unpleasant to me. Every time she saw me, she would just talk down at me. I was new in the team so I didn't know whether she did that to everyone. But I

sensed that I had to forgive her because that was what God had been teaching me, but I hadn't got around to do it until one day at home I got a phone call from one of the new teachers I had just met. She said to me, 'You know about this supervisor' – she mentioned the woman's name – 'You know, she's been horrible to all of us, and we have all decided we're going to lodge a complaint. Would you like to be the one who will share your story?' I thought, 'Oh, yes. God's opportunity.' So I said, 'Oh, yeah, I'll do it.' Then she said, 'Okay. I'll get back to you. Just write your story and I'll send it in.' So I agreed.

After I finished the conversation with this teacher, I sensed a voice inside me saying, 'How dare you!' I thought, 'What voice is that? I wouldn't say that to myself!' But it wasn't, 'How dare you!' It was, 'How dare you' (quietly). It was like an appeal to my conscience. I said, 'Is that you, God?' He didn't say, 'Yes, it's me.' But He said, 'You know, I love that woman. She's my child. She doesn't know Me, but I love her, and I would have loved you to pray for her instead of lodging a complaint.' I thought, 'Oh, but I already said 'Yes'.' Then He said, 'Just pray for her,' and so I prayed for her, forgave her and blessed her. I remembered she said she was not happy in her current job. So I prayed, 'Lord, just give her something good to do; something in her capacity that would make her happy.' And you know, the teacher who phoned me about the complaint letter never rang back. I was very pleased because I knew God took care of that for me. So God will actually give us grace if we are willing to be merciful to our enemies. He gave me grace by making sure that the teacher didn't call back.

Sometime later, the supervisor called me, and I thought 'Oh, I'm in trouble now.' She called me in and said, 'Tien, I just want to say goodbye to you and thank you very much for your hard work. I just want to let you know that I've got a promotion somewhere else and it's the very thing I really want to do. So I just want to say goodbye and thank you for being a good team mate.' I was sitting there thinking, 'God, you did it. You did it exactly how you told me!' And I just walked out of there thinking, 'Wow, that's amazing!' It was like I was on holy ground. That moment something shifted in me.

I remember when I first gave my life to the Lord I was so happy and excited knowing that I could pray to God. One day while I was driving I said, 'God, I've got a few people I want You to fix, okay? They have hurt me a lot, they have wounded me.' As I was saying that, I thought there was something not right about what I just said. But I already started, so I kept at it. But suddenly the Lord interrupted me, 'What about you, Tien, are you perfect? Don't you need to be fixed?' I said, 'Oh, okay. I think I've got it. I've got to forgive them.' Instead of continuing my prayer, I decided, 'Okay God, I forgive everyone on my list.' So I forgave them. Not only does God teach us to forgive, but He also says to bless and to release. So that day I did just that. This lesson was quite interesting for me. I knew the Bible calls us to forgive people. But sometimes I thought, 'Which side is God on? Their side or my side?' But because His grace in my life is so great, His love is so amazing, transforming my whole being, so I said, 'Okay, whatever You say, Lord, I'll do it, just so that all is well between You and me.' And so I kept forgiving many people in my life.

When my children were little, our family lived in Wellington. One morning as I was leaving their school, after dropping them off, I met a woman who had also just dropped off her children. She said 'Hi' to me so I said 'Hi' back to her. She introduced herself, 'My name is Dorothy and I'm American. I've just come here to live while my husband is working here.' So I also introduced myself, 'I'm Tien and I'm from Vietnam. We're originally from Australia and my husband is also here for work.' She then asked if I came from South or North Vietnam, so I told her South. She then said, 'Actually, there's something I would like to ask you to do for me.' I said, 'Yes? What can I do for you?' She said, 'I just want to ask you, on behalf of the American people, to forgive them and the American soldiers who were in Vietnam for what they did to your country during the war.' At that time, I was very new in the faith, but the Lord had been teaching me many lessons on forgiveness. Yet I still asked God, 'What am I supposed to do?' And He said, 'What do you think you're supposed to do?' I answered, 'Forgive.' So then I said to Dorothy, 'All right. On behalf of my people I forgive the American people and the American soldiers for what they did to my people during the war.' I remember I meant every word that I said. I believe in the power of forgiveness because He forgave my sins and give me a new life. After hearing what I said, Dorothy was so elated, she was so excited! I didn't know what would happen in the heavenlies after I

said those words. When I drove home after that encounter, God said to me, 'From now on, I want you to pray for all the Vietnam War veterans, including your own war veterans.' I said, 'But why do I have to pray for them?' And He led me to an article, a very small article, talking about the suffering of these war veterans after the Vietnam War. When these soldiers returned home after the war they were treated badly by their own people. So then I began a journey of praying for them for a couple of years.

When we came back to Australia, one day I found a notice from a prayer network. Their team was travelling with a few Vietnam War veterans around towns and cities of NSW and the ACT. The purpose of the journey was to talk to the Australian public about the veterans' predicament when they came back from Vietnam. I asked God if He wanted me to attend the meeting that was held in Canberra. However, it was like God left it for me to decide. I said to myself, 'No, I won't be going because I've prayed for them already.' But that evening I felt quite restless. I said to Wayne<sup>1</sup>, 'You've got to drop me off at the meeting.' He asked, 'What time is the meeting?' I said, 'I think about 7 o'clock.' But it was already well passed that time. I said, 'You've got to drop me off. It doesn't matter, just drop me off, and when I finish, I'll call you.' So Wayne dropped me off, and I walked up to the church building. As I walked into the church, there was a man sitting outside at the entrance. He had his arms crossed and he looked really unhappy. He just sat there with a really stern face. I thought, 'He must be the bouncer of the church.' So I walked in, and there were about 30-40 people inside. I took a seat at the back.

I was quite late for the meeting and everyone had spoken. The coordinator of the meeting stood up and called up the guy at the door. I realised then that he was one of the war veterans, not the bouncer. He came to the front - he still had that angry look on his face. The co-ordinator said to the audience, 'We have to close the meeting now. Thank you very much for attending. But before we finish, we just want to see if there's anyone else who has anything to say.' I felt God was saying to me, 'You, Tien, put your hand up.' I said, 'No, I don't want to. I have nothing to say.' I was trying to convince God that I didn't need to say anything, but in the end, He won. I put my hand up. I had never spoken in public like that, particularly in a strange meeting with people that I didn't know. They called me up, gave me the microphone and asked me for my name. I said, 'My name is Tien. I'm from South Vietnam.' I looked at the war veteran. He looked at me with this angry look. I thought, 'Oh.' Then I said quickly, 'I just wanted to say that I am very sorry on behalf of my people. I just want to say I am very sorry for what we did to you.' I realised that God wanted me to go up and apologise. So I apologised. I didn't know exactly what it was all about, but I said, 'I just want to say I'm very sorry for what my people did to you. But I'm very grateful that you were there. Because as a child, I saw the soldiers in my country, my cities, and I felt safe as a child to go to school, to carry on with my life as normally as I could. I had a taste of freedom and what freedom is about. At the fall of Saigon we had to leave Vietnam, and I understood why my parents took us out of the country. So I just want to say thank you very much. Without you, I wouldn't be here.'

As I was talking, I think I was concentrating hard on what God helped me to say. It was a big deal for me to say things like that as I had never said it before. Slowly, I began to notice the change in the countenance of this war veteran, and suddenly his eyes became gentle. He walked up to me and he said, 'Thank you so much. I've never heard anyone say that.' And I thought, 'Wow, what happened? What did God just ask me to do?' I just touched a man's life with the words He wanted me to say, but it wasn't a fabrication. It was the result of years of praying for them, even though I didn't know what it was all about. The war veteran said to me, 'You know, I love your people. But I'm sorry to say I hated your people. But I love your people, your people are so gentle.' I just stood there, I didn't know what to do. I didn't even think about thanking God at that moment. I was experiencing part of something quite amazing.

(After the meeting, some of the war veterans told me stories of things that had happened during the Vietnam War. One of them told me that a Vietnamese child gave his mate a can of Coke, and when he opened it, it exploded in his face.)

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1 - Wayne is Tien's husband

So that was the thing that I wanted to say to you. Firstly, the Lord taught me to forgive. Secondly, He taught me to ask for forgiveness. I had prepared a talk on mercy, which I could share next time. But I think this is what God wanted me to share today, to whet your appetite about mercy.

What He taught me in the second lesson of forgiveness is that when I recognise what I did wrong, by asking to be forgiven, it teaches me to become more aware of my spiritual state and of who I really am. Whenever I can, I would ask people to forgive me, even when I don't feel like it.

\*Whenever someone does something wrong, I go to God and say, 'God, I forgive this person for doing those things to me. I also ask you to forgive me if I have done anything to exacerbate the situation or maybe I have reacted in some way that I wasn't aware of that caused them to act that way towards me. I ask you to forgive both of us.' Then I would remind God what His words say about this person and ask Him for mercy toward this person. I always make sure that I apply these three things because His mercy is so great and it is there for all of us.

When I prepared this talk, I looked at 'love' in 1 Corinthians 13. I will read it out to you.

*'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.'*<sup>2</sup>

When I discovered that the word 'love' in these verses can be replaced with the word 'God', I was so elated, I was so happy – this is God. But, you know, I find it really hard sometimes to love people. Yesterday, when I was sitting musing over this Scripture verse with God, God said, 'Why don't you put mercy in it? Because if you are merciful, loving people is a lot easier. If you're not merciful, this is a hard thing to do. Just be merciful to people, forgive them.' And He brought me back to the first story I shared with you about my supervisor, when He said, 'How dare you.' He said, 'Do you know what's going on in her life? Do you know what her struggles are? You judge her because she is mean to you, but does she want to live a mean life? It's because you only know what is on the surface, but I know more. I want you to be merciful.'

So whenever someone hurts me, I always say, 'Okay, you have heard about bullies at school. There's a lot of people hurting other people around us, but that's their façade. That's the way that they try to protect their hearts, because they don't want to be hurt.' I was there, I did that for a season, and that season went on for too long. And so because of that, God can teach me about mercy. He said, 'You don't know these people, you don't know their lives, you don't know their story. I just want you to be merciful. If they have done something, forgive them, and bless them and release them to me. Your prayers, even if in the midst of your hurt, allow Me to work and do a lot more in their lives, and I can change them.' And I thought, 'Wow. That's the way I can touch people.' I know that in myself I might not have that kind of patience, kindness and perseverance to do that.

I realised that mercy is found all through the Bible. But because it doesn't have the word 'mercy,' it does not mean there's no mercy there. You know God is merciful. (It's not about teaching you guys, so much as allowing God to teach me and change me and open my eyes to the things that I had not seen.)

The Bible says that:

- God is rich in mercy.
- His mercies are new every morning.
- The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.
- His mercy endures forever.
- His mercy reaches unto the heavens.
- His glory is His mercy.

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2 – 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NIV

“Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him<sup>3</sup> there and proclaimed the name of the Lord, and the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin.’”<sup>4</sup>

I have more to share but I might do it next time. Yesterday, the Lord showed me something in Romans 12:

**Romans 12:9-21 (NKJV)** – *Let love be without hypocrisy, abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour, giving preference to one another, not lacking in diligence. Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer. Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for the good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath for it is written “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay” says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink, for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

When I read this yesterday, the Lord showed me, ‘That is mercy, Tien, that is mercy.’ In my night seasons, I cried out to the Lord a lot, and I read Psalms. And the psalmist sometimes said, ‘Do something to my enemies.’ You know, ‘gouge their eyes out,’ do all those kind of things. I read that with reservation, but I just read it because I thought, ‘If the psalmist could say it, I could read it.’ But now I realise that even with our enemies, we can go to God and cry for mercy. Like the ISIS, the terrorists, the people who come and hurt us, the Lord asks us for mercy. Because in your mercy, in the way you give out mercy, God can do so much more. But when you hold back and you want God’s vengeance, God can’t use you because God is mercy. That is one of His attributes – that’s Him. But we don’t talk about mercy. Like I said to you, mercy implies that I have done something wrong, ‘I need your pardon.’ How do you feel when you do something wrong, you go up to someone and say, ‘Please forgive me.’ It takes humility to do that.

Like I said to you before, when I discovered mercy, I was so touched and grateful to God because He saved me, even though He knew all my sins. But He is also interested in saving my enemies, the people whom I could not touch because I have limitations. But He said, ‘If you love them, you forgive them, you intercede for them, and I will do, because that is My job. But your job is to love them into the Kingdom by releasing them, by blessing them. And whatever I ask you to do after that, I will let you know. But for now, you must walk without holding grudges or unforgiveness. As you have been pardoned, I want you to pardon them.’

One last story. Some years ago when I was driving to work, I actually didn’t see a sign on the road that said ‘60 km’ in a 100 kph zone. I was travelling very carefully, I was driving at 99 kph, and then 200 metres up the road there was a policeman with a hand-held radar. He flagged me down, and I thought, ‘Maybe he’s lost and wants directions. I’m doing pretty good. I looked at my speedometer and saw 99 kph, I’m doing fine, no worries.’ So I stopped, and he said, ‘Did you realise you were doing 99 kph in a 60 kph zone?’ I said, ‘No. You’re kidding me. I did not.’ He said, ‘You don’t believe me?’ I said, ‘No!’ He said, ‘Come over here.’ He took me to the police car and replayed the video, which showed me travelling passed the 60 km sign for roadwork. But there was no roadwork. And so I said, ‘No. You can’t do that, I didn’t see the sign.’ He said, ‘Okay, you will have to argue with the court.’ Because it was the day before the long weekend, the fine was over \$600, plus 8 demerit points. I asked, ‘How long do I have to pay?’ I think he said about a month.

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3 – ‘him’ here is Moses

4 – Exodus 34:5-7a

I was on my way to teach a client who was a police officer. When I walked in, my face was as white as a sheet, so he said, 'What's wrong?' I told him and he said, 'No worries. Have you ever got booked for speeding before?' I said, 'Never.' And he said, 'No worries, I think I can fix that for you. I can ask my friend, because obviously you didn't see the sign.' I explained to him that I didn't see any sign and that there was no obvious roadwork. It took a week for him to get a reply from his colleague, and he said, 'Well, if you had only been 2 kph over, that would have been okay, but not 39 kph over. It's out of my power.' So I thought, 'Oh, no.' He said, 'If you go to court you should hire a lawyer; that would cost about \$1,000.' I thought that's more expensive than the fine. He advised me not to take the police to court because they were very likely to win.

So I prayed. I prayed like I never prayed before. I prayed and asked God, 'God, I'm innocent.' I went to some Christian friends and explained it to them, that I needed prayer. They said, 'Well, if you did that, you should pay your fine. Don't ask to pray for mercy.' But I kept crying to God for mercy.

However, in a 100 kph zone, if you want drivers to reduce down to 60 kph, they're supposed to put 80 kph and then 60 kph signs. The next week, when I travelled back to my client's house, they had 60 kph and then 60 kph, so two 60 kph signs. Then a couple of days later, it was 80 kph and 60 kph. I took note of all of that and I wrote a three-page letter. I took the letter to an attorney friend of ours and asked, 'What do you think?' He read my letter and said, 'If you go to court with this letter, the judge won't look at it. Maybe you should ask for leniency or community work.' I said, 'But I think I'm innocent.' He said, 'No. You don't have a chance.' Nonetheless, I sent the letter to the police, advising that the way that they put the sign was inconsistent and not right, and there was no roadwork. I waited and waited. The day before I was supposed to pay the fine or go to court, I received a letter from the police. It said that they had checked with the company who put the sign out, and they admitted they had not followed correct signage procedure. Therefore, the fine was waived. And that was mercy. I was pardoned.

But I think that the greatest pardon was that God saw, and He allowed me to be pardoned. My client, Christian friends and attorney friend all thought that I wouldn't have a case. However, I went to God and asked Him for mercy. The Bible says that if we are merciful, we will find mercy.

So I just want to leave that with you, because that's why we all need to practise mercy, because in this season we will be persecuted. But if we apply mercy, the mercy of God, unconditionally, then the Lord will take care of us, because that is what Jesus demonstrated when He went to the cross.

Tien Nguyen

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*(Kingdom Living Community, Canberra)*

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