

#35 15-16  
Psalm 82  
Amos 7:7-17  
Colossians 1:1-14  
**Luke 10:25-37**

## *O, Mercy!*

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 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 mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going 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 while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

This is the Word of Our Lord . . . And the word is "go and do likewise" . . . go and be borderlessly kind!

It's been a tough week in the United States of America. It feels to me like I have been preaching on a lot of incidents violence this summer. I'm getting tired of it. Tired of trying to come up with some something new to say. I will say right up front, I feel more convicted than ever that "God's Will" is slowly moving forward into becoming a reality, in spite of what we may see. It just seems to me that more and more people are getting tired of the divisions, the angry rhetoric, and the absolutes which are just lies, created by evil forces, in order to keep some egos in power instead of the goodness of God.

I really do believe that the world is getting tired of the fights and more and more just want peace. More and more people are willing to put aside their anger and seek companionship with "the other".

To recap: there were 2 more deaths of black men this past week, which led to the shooting of 12 officers (5 of whom died) by the hand of one lone shooter, during a demonstration in Dallas for Black Lives Matter. This caused all kinds of reactions. There are reports of policemen and black people coming closer to one another in a constructive way to help soothe the divides. There were reports of angry people from both sides - "Police supporters" and "Blacklivesmatter supporters" fighting with each other . . . It struck me as powerful that the concept that one could value Black lives and Blue lives at the same time seems in some circles to be a difficult one to accept.

But Christians should not be divided on this at all. Our calling is to always chose mercy. Always choose kindness. It isn't an easy thing to do. That is why following a faith is something we do all life long - so we can grow and change and learn and trust that with time, we will be more like what Jesus asks us to be. We are all works in process. Which is why mercy is so important. Not only to be able to offer it to others, but to be able to be kind and merciful to ourselves ~ to accept it from others for ourselves. If we think we can sit in judgment of others, often we are at the same time cutting off mercy for ourselves when we need it more than those we judge! If we sow division and judgment, we reap so much solitude and loneliness.

The word that the lawyer used at the end of our scriptures, which is translated "mercy", is *λεος* (Eleos) in the original Greek. Eleos occurs 27 times in the NT, and is mostly translated as mercy - sometimes they used compassion. Strong's Greek scholars have defined the word as "kindness or good will toward the miserable and afflicted, *joined with a desire to relieve them.*"

Just for fun I looked up more about the word Mercy and it's etymology (the history of a word). Interesting to me was that from the Latin, it seems to have come from the root "merc"~ as in "merchandise" and meant "price paid, wages". That reminded me of the saying by Alice Walker, "Activism is the rent I pay for living on this planet." Mercy as a commodity - something that people value or find useful! Something that Christ is calling us to aspire to see and do in other people and for other people. Finding all other people - regardless of our biases, as having value.

From the Wikipedia pages on Mercy:

Mercy is one of the basic virtues of chivalry, Hinduism, Christian ethics, Islam, and Judaism. It is also related to concepts of justice and morality in behavior between people. [And for it] to be [considered to be] mercy, the behavior generally cannot be compelled by outside forces. A famous literary example that [makes reference] to . . . the legal aspects [of mercy] is from *The Merchant of Venice* when Portia asks Shylock to show mercy. He asks, "On what compulsion, must I?" She responds:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd.  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

So what have we learned so far? Mercy blesses those who give it as well as those who receive it. Mercy cannot be compelled - we have to want to give it. To be able to offer mercy, one must be able to receive mercy and vice-versa. Mercy is always possible. Mercy is highly valuable. Mercy means go and be borderlessly kind. Mercy means good will toward the miserable and afflicted, *joined with a desire to relieve them.*

And finally - Jesus asks us all to go and be merciful to everyone, including those we may not like. They probably need it more anyway.