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What Does it Mean to be Merciful?

Lamentations 3:22-23: (KJV) ²²*It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

Sometimes in the overwhelming flow of life we can forget the simplest things. We get so caught up in a "me first" - and sometimes a "me only" mentality that it never even crosses our minds to stop and consider some of the most basic and healing attributes available to humankind - kindness and mercy. What is mercy? How does it work? If we were to apply mercy on a regular basis, would it change our world and more importantly, could it change the way we see our world?

What is mercy?

Old Testament: Micah 6:8: (KJV) *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love **mercy <2617>**, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

Kindness/Mercy: Strongs #2617, goodness, kindness, faithfulness

Hosea 6:6: (NASB) *For I delight in **loyalty <2617>** rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

The word for *loyalty* here is the same as was previously translated *mercy*! We will develop this further, but your loyalty to a person can draw you to a point of mercy.

New Testament: Matthew 5:7: (NRSV) *Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive **mercy <1653>**.*

Mercy: Strongs #1653 el-eh-eh'-o; to be compassionate (by word or deed, specially, by divine grace): have compassion (pity on), have (obtain, receive, shew) mercy (on).

Another word translated "mercy" in English:

Mercy: Strongs #1656 eleov eleos el'-eh-os

- 1) mercy: kindness or goodwill towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them
- 1a) of men towards men: to exercise the virtue of mercy, show one's self merciful
- 1b) of God towards men: in general providence; the mercy and clemency of God in providing and offering to men salvation by Christ

When there is misery, mercy takes a role to alleviate such misery.

Oftentimes we look at God's grace as being an overview of all that God does for us, but mercy and grace are actually different. They work together: Love - Justice - Mercy - Grace

MERCY: UNDESERVED COMPASSION BESTOWED UPON SOMEONE WHO DESERVES A NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCE AND THEREBY BRINGS RELIEF OF PAIN, SUFFERING OR MISERY.

Mercy in action: Matthew 9:9-13

Point of interest: The vast majority of scriptures that talk about mercy are focused on the mercy of God to man. There are but a few scriptures that talk about human mercy towards each other.

There are several texts that link mercy and justice together for us: Micah 6:8 Hosea 12:5-6: It is logical to assume that true and lasting mercy cannot be applied in a context where true justice does not prevail...mercy may not be appropriate if something is unjust.

So, with that basis, we expand the mercy connection: Psalms 89:14: Here we see that God Almighty has the justice/mercy connection coupled with truth!

JUSTICE: THE EVEN-HANDED CONSEQUENCE BESTOWED UPON SOMEONE BASED UPON RIGHTEOUS TREATMENT IN RESPONSE TO THEIR ACTIONS, WORDS AND MOTIVATIONS AND THEREBY BRINGS EQUITY AND BALANCE. JUSTICE HOLDS TO MERCY TO ANCHOR ITS FORCE.

Proverbs 3:3: *Let not **mercy <2617>** and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:*

Proverbs 16:6: *By **mercy <2617>** and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.*

Truth has its roots in God; therefore truth has its basis in justice. In a court of law, what do they want? "The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!" Mercy would not exist but for justice. Mercy seeks grace to multiply its reach.

Mercy in action: Matthew 20:29-34: Mercy changes others' circumstances when it was not required to be rendered, so it is an important action we can and should take. **But how was that healing based in justice?** Isaiah 61:1: Jesus quoted this verse in the Temple and confirmed that it was about him. Jesus fulfilled the just plan of God by coming to show this would be a permanent change in the future. Jesus was moved with compassion. He felt for them and changed their circumstances by giving of himself.

How does God's mercy express itself?

Psalms 36:5-12: (NASB) ⁵Your **lovingkindness** (mercy), O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the skies. ⁶Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O LORD, You preserve man and beast. ⁷How precious is Your **lovingkindness** (mercy), O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. ⁸They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. ⁹For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. ¹⁰O continue Your **lovingkindness** (mercy) to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart. ¹¹Let not the foot of pride come upon me, and let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

God's mercy surrounds the earth, protects the feeble and is reachable as long as we do not allow our own pride or another's wickedness to interfere. God's mercy has different levels of expression. It is fully expressed through the ransom of Jesus, as we will discuss later. For believers and followers of Jesus, God's mercies are already apparent. For "everybody else," it is yet to come.

1 Peter 1:3-5: God's mercy is expressed through the death and resurrection of Jesus and that leads to heavenly inheritance! It all comes back to the love of God.

LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION OF CREATION FOR IT IS THE DRIVING FORCE THAT ENDOWS ALL THAT IS CREATED WITH AN UNMISTAKABLE HARMONY OF PURPOSE. LOVE GAVE BIRTH TO COMMUNICATION, ADORATION AND THE SACRED MUSIC OF DISCIPLESHIP.

Discipleship in Christ is the precursor of what is to come to everyone else. It is given to the true follower of Christ ahead of time to those. It is given to those who have dedicated themselves to Christ in a time when it is not convenient or easy, and at a time when people laugh at you. But it is such a privilege and an expression of God's mercy and then grace!

God's love had to be first, because that is what created a just environment.

Titus 3:4-7: God's mercy is expressed through the *availability* of the water of rebirth, which leads to the Spirit...this brings us to living in God's grace.

Hebrews 4:14-16: Yet another connection for mercy - this time it is grace.

Mercy given is never based on "what they deserve." It is a gift based on love and justice.

GRACE IS UNDESERVED FAVOR OR STANDING BESTOWED UPON SOMEONE WHO IS NOT CAPABLE OF EARNING SUCH RECOGNITION AND THEREBY BRINGS PREVIOUSLY UNATTAINABLE OPPORTUNITY.

Mercy in action: Luke 10:30-37

So, how do all the elements we have talked about fit together?

LOVE NEEDS JUSTICE IN ORDER TO FLOURISH. DRIVEN BY LOVE, JUSTICE HOLDS TO MERCY TO ANCHOR ITS FORCE. MERCY WOULD NOT EXIST BUT FOR JUSTICE. MERCY SEEKS GRACE TO MULTIPLY ITS REACH. GRACE IS BORN OUT OF MERCY AND DEFINED BY LOVE.

A text with all four elements: Ephesians 2:4-7: (NASB) ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, (MERCY) because of His great love with which He loved us, (LOVE) ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, (JUSTICE) made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) (GRACE), ⁶and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 23:23: God's mercy is given in the context of justice and judgment.

Mercy is *not* getting what you *do* deserve. Grace is getting what you *do not* deserve.

In the following teaching, is Jesus telling us to give people what they deserve? Luke 6:27-

36: (NASB) ²⁷*But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; (do not retaliate; remember this does not have to be a physical hit) and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. (give to those who take) ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. (give to those in need) ³¹ Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. (live justly) ³² If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. (live a higher standard) ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Mercy magnified!!*

God's mercy and grace is a template for us to follow in dealing with others.

Here is a great parable regarding kindness and mercy: Matthew 18:23-33

We can live mercifully by:

- [Claiming the mercy of God on our behalf](#)
- [Appreciating the mercy of God on our behalf](#)
- [Realizing the magnitude of God's mercy on our behalf related to our small earthly issues](#)
- [Extending the mercy of God on our behalf to those over whom we have power](#)

Israel's command towards mercy: Zechariah 7:8-14: They were told to live by the law but practice mercy. They refused to listen and the consequence was the desolation of the land. God's mercy was withdrawn because they did not show mercy to others. We really need to be thinking "mercy first" wherever possible.

Romans 9:14-15: God is not compelled to show all mercy in all circumstances, yet here He does show His willingness. Does He have mercy on all of His creation? Yes, because His plan, set up before the foundation of the earth, shows the sacrifice for sin even before the sin happened. That ransom satisfied justice, allowing mercy to eventually flourish.

For right now during the unfolding of His plan, God can pick and choose where His mercy applies and where it does not apply. Is that unjust? No, because the grand plan of God will apply to everyone. During the working of the details, there will be those who are drawn towards Him and those that will walk away from Him. It is important to note that He had compassion on anyone at any time who wanted to serve the God of Israel. That included foreigners in the land. There is a sense that God's mercy always applies to those who seek after Him now, but will apply to everyone in the future when pain and misery is removed.

James 2:8-13: We are to be a conduit of mercy. God's mercy flows into us, gets reworked as mercy to others and flows out from us. We have received magnificent mercy! We live under liberty which encourages mercy. We are obligated, therefore, to extend mercy. Do all these things and triumph over judgment! Mercy opens the door for grace.

Through God's love, He created a world in which it would be justice-related. Mercy cannot properly and appropriately exist unless it is founded in justice. If you don't have mercy, you can't open the door to grace. Grace is granting you favor that is not deserved; mercy is taking away consequences that *are* deserved - pain and suffering as a result of what you did.

God's love, justice, mercy and grace show us how we should build our lives based on love first. If we love one another in a just manner, we can figure out how to be merciful. We don't have grace we can give others, but we can share God's grace with them. That's where mercy fits in our lives! It opens our lives to God's grace.



James 1:22: (NIV) *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

Don't just listen to the word of God...do what it says! Mercy is an action! We can think about mercy, dream about mercy, write about mercy and sing songs about mercy! But unless we do it, it is meaningless. Put mercy where it belongs so God's grace can be opened up to those around us.

*So what does it mean to be merciful?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*