

## Grace and Mercy

Good Morning!

I have had many conversations with God in my lifetime. Have you ever made a mistake or taken some action that you feel guilty over or that you may even be struggling with today? Well I have some good news for you...

Remember Nehemiah the Kings cupbearer? We did a sermon on it and talked about the rebuilding of the wall and from that looked at the leadership lessons. Well today we are briefly looking at Nehemiah again but with an eye towards a different topic. Today we will be discussing those beautiful twins of Grace and Mercy.

Turn with me to Nehemiah chapter 9

As we join the narrative, we see here the people of Israel confessing their sin. They stood up together and read from the book of the Law of the Lord for a quarter of the day. Then they spent another quarter of the day and made confession of their Sins to God and worshipped and praised him. They talked of many of the good things that He had done for them. We see them confessing that despite his goodness they had rebelled. In fact, if you look at verse 26 it reads: "Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets who had warned them to turn back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies."

We then see them taking again about how they did not learn from their mistakes and so again they were punished until they repented and God delivered them again.

And so we see the cycle of forgiveness, disobedience, correction, and repentance repeating itself over and over. But I want to draw you're here in Nehemiah chapter 9 to verse 30-33:

*"Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit and through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God. Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day. Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly."*

Now Israel had been punished repeatedly for their sins and disobedience to God and yet we see here in Nehemiah that despite the history and the trouble with the people of Israel they had God's grace and mercy. We even see his hand in bringing about their restoration through his servant Nehemiah.

In our world today we can see that in many things the people of this world have gone away from God's will. We see turmoil, we see struggle and we see strife and yet our God is always faithful and just and willing to forgive and restore. It seems that his mercy and grace are abundant.

Because of this an idea has presented itself that no matter what we do we will be forgiven. So many have forgotten that God disciplines those whom he loves and that he wants us to live for him and obey him. He has inexhaustible grace and mercy and yet he wants us to live for him not stay in our disobedience or sin. It is clear to me that in this day and age we need to pray and have faith in his abundant grace and mercy, and yet although we will make mistakes and will need to fall back on God's grace and mercy, we need to still try to have faith and walk in it. It is a perspective thing. Grace and mercy are NOT a license to sin, they are forgiveness when we do.

This isn't a message of salvation this morning; it is a message of abundant life in the grace and mercy of God almighty. This morning it is my desire that we all see that God's grace and mercy are sufficient for us all.

So I want to delve into what grace and mercy actually are today. To do this I want to break it down into four specific categories:

- Hope – God is merciful even when we may not have awareness of our sin
- Salvation – God is merciful as we have seen above even when his children are disobedient
- Love – God is merciful not because of our worthiness of it but because Jesus has paid the price for our sin
- Grace – God gives us grace not to feed our self-righteousness or pride but because he is merciful

So we have said quite a bit about Grace and Mercy at this point but I want to elaborate a little so that there will be total clarity on this topic. To do this I want to stop here and define what Grace and Mercy actually mean:

Grace: This word comes from the Greek word "Charis", it literally means the receipt of God's unmerited favor. In plain terms grace it is a kindness from our God that we don't deserve.

Grace is a gift. Grace is also divine assistance given to us for the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit to bring about the likeness of Christ within us and it is the blessing of imputed sanctification through Jesus.

Webster defines the theological (God) based definition of grace as: "The unmerited love and favor of God toward human beings; divine influence acting in a person to make the person pure, morally strong; the condition of a person brought to God's favor through his influence; a special virtue, gift or help given to a person by God"

So often there is confusion and so many think that grace and mercy are synonyms. I want to clarify the difference. Although they are both expressions of God's favor and love, the confusion can lead to problems...

When we experience God's grace, we receive favor that we Do NOT deserve. Now alternatively when we receive God's mercy, we are spared the punishment that we DO deserve.

We can read and clearly see that when the children of Israel broke their covenant with God, their actions caused them to face a lot of turmoil and strife. As we delve into the scriptures we can find many instances wherein we see that the children of God failed, Kings failed, priests failed, and prophets failed. Yet the good news for you and I, our children and our children's children is that despite those failings, there is one simple fact that endures...

We serve a gracious and merciful God.

As we sit back at home and perhaps watch the television news; are there times when we see things that are abhorrent to us? There things that we see that must grieve our God immensely.

These things have made me sit up from time to time and question the brightness of the light of the church in the world. Do we as Christians when we observe these atrocities, sins, and abhorrent behaviors and look at them in the light of how God see's them? Why is it that the media today only focuses on the sensational and evocative?

Why do you suppose we see so little of the work of God's church as a whole in the media? There are a few stories, but I have often asked myself why is there so little visibility of the things God's church is doing in the world today?

This brought up a very disturbing thought for me...

Is it because it isn't sensational or story worthy? Is it because it is uninteresting? Is it because it doesn't sell papers or ad time on TV? Or... is it simply because we have become overwhelmed and there is simply less being done?

I must be naïve because when I think about God's grace and mercy in the light of the state of the world, not only does he love us but that love is the greatest love of all. When I think of his blessings, protections, promises and who he is... It seems the most sensational, good, news worthy story around.

As Christians we are God's chosen people. We are kings and priests and have ostensibly made the choice to live in faith and in accordance with his word. That is amazing yet faith without works is dead. Is our Christianity taking action or is it taking a phone video of the world's problems. Are we speaking His word? Are we sharing His good news? Like the prophets of old are we directing people to their hope, to their steadfast grace and mercy or are we failing to help, to teach? Have we as Christians become afraid to speak because of fear?

I see the things around me that I know are abhorrent to God and yet he continues to offer his love, his grace and his mercy

God is my hope! God's mercies towards me are abundant and his grace abounds. Our world needs hope, it needs direction and so the church needs to be present.

God is faithful and just to forgive sin. He has not placed a limit on our forgiveness, yet some use this as an excuse. Others are not even aware...

Did you know that there is an epidemic right now in the world? The psychologists and sociologists call it Narcotizing Dysfunction. People are so inundated with information about all the myriad horrible things happening in the world that a form of desensitization occurs. How it presents itself is that our minds confuse all this information and data about the terrible things with the feedback that results from doing something about a problem. So, people are deceived by their brains that they are involved in making a difference when actually they are simply overloaded with information about a problem or situation.

Wikipedia defines it as: a theory that as mass media inundates people on a particular issue, they become apathetic to it, substituting knowledge for action.

So God's answer is... Grace and Mercy  
Grace and Mercy give us hope  
Hope means that no matter how many times we fail he loves us

This morning as you reflect, ask yourself: How has God's grace and mercy affected my life?

Have you seen his grace and mercy in situations in your personal life?

Did you know that the Holy Spirit tells you when something is not right? You can feel something off on the inside. Some have the gift of prophesy and others see visions or have dreams given to them by God. Today do we recognize these things

as God's mercy? Do we cognitively recognize that we are hearing from God? Are we sensitive to his leadings and his voice or do we fall into unknowing disobedience or even willful disobedience?

God let's us choose, but he still wants us to choose to trust him, have faith in him and follow the directions of his word.

BUT...

My hope remains because even when I make a wrong choice, I know his mercy and grace and willingness to restore remain undaunted. That is the hope of us all.

Today we celebrate his love, grace and mercy because they give us salvation. Not through our righteousness or our works, but because of Jesus. It is unmerited grace.

I believe that sometimes it is hard to be like Jesus and love people when they let us down, but it isn't for God. God has provided a way of escape. It may be unpopular but repenting *is not gone*. *If I sin I go to God and repent that sin even though I know he will forgive me. His grace is so freeing and his mercy comes upon me when I repent my sin and turn from my sin.* Did you know that is what repentance actually means? Repentance doesn't mean to simply say I am sorry, it means to turn away from sin and wickedness.

Let me make this super clear:

2 Chronicles 7:14

*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

Now not only can we make those mistakes and receive restoration, love, grace and mercy but God will also empower us.

We who are called by his name have the authority and power through prayer and mediation on Jesus to see our land change.

Are we walking in that authority through prayer or are we overwhelmed and inundated with information?

This morning having Christ being granted all authority; and him granting us the authority to speak in his name. This morning in the name of Jesus I speak with the power and authority of God to command that every assignment of the enemy that is over our lives, be it life issues, family troubles, financial concerns, career, addictions or marriage issues is hereby cancelled in the name of Jesus! Not only have we almighty grace and mercy, but divine authority.

Finally I want to briefly speak about God's unconditional love. He has said Matthew 22:36-40:

*"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"*

*Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

Self-righteousness is childishness and prideful in the eyes of God. It is not acceptable.

We as his children have a choice:

Do we sit by or do we make a difference in the name of Jesus?

Are we ambassadors for Christ or spectators?

When we surrender to God he manifests miracles in our lives! He wants us to live abundantly, he gives us love, hope, grace and mercy, but we have to choose to live in that abundance!

Wait a second!

There are 604,800 seconds in a week  
Sunday Service is 7,200 seconds approximately  
That's 1.2% of the total week.

Here is why I will spend more than 1.2% of my week on God...  
God is:

- Elohim-the God above all Gods
- Jehovah Jirah- Our provider
- Jehovah Shalom-God of Peace
- Jehovah Shammah-God is present
- Jehovah Rapha- our Healer
- JehovahNissi-God of Victory
- Jehovah Tsidkenu- God of righteousness
- Jehovah Raah- God is my Shepherd
- El Shaddai- the Almighty God

Folks, God's grace and mercy have brought me through many trials and troubles. I am alive today because of him. He is praise-worthy, he is salvation, he is just, he is loving, he is my restoration, he is my peace, he restores my soul and all he asks is my acceptance, my desire to try my best and... To love him and each of you.

