
Need Mercy? Meet Jesus!

Sermon Text: I Timothy 1:12-17, Luke 15:1-10
Mariner Sands Chapel

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This week, we join with other Christian congregations to observe World Communion Sunday. It is a time for remembering that around the globe—in different languages, with different traditions and customs, and in various forms of liturgy—the Lord’s Supper is celebrated throughout Christendom. At its best, therefore, World Communion Sunday serves two purposes: it is both a joyous and meaningful partaking in Jesus’ sacred meal with his friends and a mind-opening exposure to different Christian traditions from around the world.

When we listen to news reports around the world, we are reminded of tragedies and social unrest in Asia, Africa, South America, and in our own country. Increased levels of violence, mixed with fear, supported by splinter groups who foment hatred, makes us all wonder if anything will get any better. We have an ongoing global conflict with the Islamic State, making it all but impossible to restore communities in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. 195 countries in the United Nations struggle to find a lasting peace.

In such times, talk about mercy may seem more like wishful thinking. But mercy matters – now more than ever. According to the Bible, it matters because we all need forgiveness. But mercy also matters because it is what can join us all together in spite of our differences. We witnessed this act of radical forgiveness with the recent trial of former police officer, Andrea Guyger, who shot and killed her neighbor downstairs, Botham Jean. She was sentenced to ten years in jail, but what caught everyone’s attention was Jean’s brother, Brandt, who spoke to the courtroom about forgiveness, and he asked the judge if he could give her a hug as a sign of forgiveness. The hug was followed by another unusual moment as Judge Tammy Kemp stepped down from the bench to hug Jean’s mother, and handed Andrea Guyger a Bible. Despite many who criticized this random act, it shows how forgiveness can be an incredible force for good.

Mercy is at the heart of the Christian faith. The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” God is not just merciful – He is rich in mercy. Mercy fuels compassion, providing promising glints of light in a darkened world. It’s kindness, forward forgiveness, and empathy. Mercy chooses not to be offended, and compassionately sees a hurting heart behind hurtful words. God’s mercy is reflected in the cross of Christ, a direct reflection of His love for us. Mercy is an extension of and expression of love, “an act of kindness, compassion, or favor.” Mercy is a characteristic of the One True God.

We all need it, and Jesus is the one who demonstrated it at the cross. He talked about it on the road, while traveling among the Pharisees and the tax collectors in our passage today from Luke. And in our passage from Paul’s letter to Timothy, we see the example of a good person, PAUL, who needed mercy in the worst way, who considered himself to be the chief of sinners, who met Christ, and as a result found the forgiveness he needed. In Christ, we too, find the forgiveness and mercy we need. It is a godly kind of mercy that does not compromise justice, but collides with the tragic in our world, offers boundless compassion to act, and overcomes evil with good.