

Jesus' Surprising Mercy

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[0:00] Let's open our Bibles tonight to the book of Hosea. We're in chapter 6 and the first six verses.!

Let us acknowledge the Lord. Let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear.

He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth. What can I do with you, Ephraim?

What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets.

I killed you with the words of my mouth. My judgments flashed like lightning upon you. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.

[1:23] She stood five feet away from me. She was closer to five million miles away.

Jane, that's what I'm going to call her. Jane and I work together, and so for four hours every day, we stand side by side. But in my eyes, there seemed to be an almost infinite distance between us.

So why did I feel that way? So close? So far away? Well, let me tell you a little bit about Jane, the little bit I do know about her. She's about 25.

She never went to college. She grew up in a broken home. She's foul-mouthed. She comes to work every day on this little rickety moped.

And with some pride, she tells us, or she's told me, about fights, physical fistfights, that her mom has had with other women. And the last thing you need to know about Jane is that she is a practicing homosexual.

[2:37] So you can see why I was standing so close, and yet felt so very far away from her. And I think it's strange, as I'm thinking about it, but I want to reach this girl with the gospel.

And that's by God's grace. That's by God's grace. But what bridge will reach from me to her? She's miles and miles away.

Is there some bridge that will reach from me to her that I can walk on? And by God's grace, give her the gospel time and time again.

So my question for you is, do you have anyone in your life, and I'm sure you do, that it's almost impossible to fathom that they could be saved?

That you could share the gospel with them? Is there someone that you just can't imagine that Christ would save them? There doesn't seem to be any way of reaching them.

[3:44] And yet, the Bible tells us that there is a bridge from us to them, from Christ to them. And we read about that bridge, and we are going to hear about it from Matthew 9.

So I'm asking you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew 9. And we are going to listen to the calling of a tax collector named Levi.

He was the son of Alphaeus, and he also had another name. It was Matthew. So Matthew 9. We're going to read just a few verses, 9 through 13.

As Jesus went on from there, that's Capernaum, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. Follow me, he told him.

And Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.

[4:44] When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, why does your teacher eat with the tax collectors and the sinners? On hearing this, Jesus said, it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

But go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice, for I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

If you're taking notes this evening, the sermon outline is going to be very simple. We have three points that start with the words Jesus' mercy. And then we have a fourth point and it's called possible responses.

So in the first place, we see Jesus' mercy towards Matthew. Jesus' mercy towards Matthew. We don't know very much about Matthew. He never says anything in the Gospels.

And it's ironic that though he didn't say anything when he was walking along with Jesus every day, he sure had a lot to say about Jesus after his death and resurrection.

[5:54] He wrote the book of Matthew. And so, what we have in front of us is something very precious. It's very special. This is Matthew's personal testimony.

So the account is precious. It's a very personal thing, isn't it, when we tell what God has done for us. And it's especially wonderful when an apostle does it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And so we should sit up and listen and say, what does Matthew think is important about his calling? What did he want to include in his testimony?

What really moved him? Why did he come and follow Christ? So let's look at Matthew's personal testimony. Or we can call it Jesus' mercy towards him.

Matthew says, Jesus was walking along and I was there. He saw me and I was sitting at a tax collector's booth because I was a tax collector.

[7:00] So what does that mean exactly? Let's stop there for a second. What is a tax collector? Well, I dug into this a little bit because I know pretty much what you guys know, that tax collectors are bad.

I don't know why, but they're bad. So we've got to figure out why are they bad? Well, in Palestine, there was two kinds of tax collectors. The first ones, they worked directly right under the Romans. And the second ones, that's Matthew. They were called the publicans. And they actually collected the taxes from the common people. So Matthew, if you think about it, would have collected taxes from people like Peter and James and John and maybe even Jesus.

They all lived in Capernaum together. So Matthew was a member of this hated class of people.

People hated tax collectors and we know that, but they especially hated the publicans.

And it's not because they just really hated taxes. I think that's pretty common. And if they're anything like me, they don't like taxes very much. But it wasn't because of that. They hated them because of what kind of people they were.

[8:13] The tax collectors were extortionists. They were traitors. They were godless on top of everything else. They had a habit of taking more than they were supposed to.

And they handled money with images on them. And if you're a good Jew in Jesus' day, you view that as breaking the second commandment.

And they had regular, everyday dealings with the unclean, with the dogs, with the Gentiles. And so, there were all those things.

And on top of it all, they didn't care. They didn't care. They were godless. They couldn't care less what you thought about their ungodliness and their unrighteousness.

So they had horrible reputations. We know that much. They had horrible reputations. They were sort of the ancient Jewish equivalent of a personal injury attorney. And you know what I'm talking about.

[9:12] I've seen this one commercial where there's this angry older man saying, tell them you mean business. And then, in small letters underneath, it says, hired actor.

And you just feel sick. Like, ugh. Well, that's what people felt like when they saw Matthew. Maybe, just maybe, it was possible for there to be an honest publican.

But the default position is you're guilty. And we know that Matthew was probably guilty. So back to Matthew's personal testimony. One day, I was sitting at the tax collector's booth and Jesus came by and he said, follow me.

And believe it or not, I got up and I followed him. And Matthew wants us to see just how awesome Jesus' mercy is.

And kids, I don't mean awesome in this playground sense of the word. I mean, what it really means. Like, when you go to Niagara Falls and you see millions and millions of tons of water falling hundreds of feet.

[10:20] And if you go there, you'll see people and they're just, they're, they're awestruck. So what I'm saying is awesome. Jesus' mercy was awesome in the sense that you covered your mouth.

You sat down when you saw Jesus having mercy on Matthew. See, Matthew wasn't special. We know that. He wasn't special in any way, except he was especially sinful. He wasn't a God-fearer like Cornelius. We heard about Cornelius, just offhand. He wasn't a devout Pharisee. He wasn't even a humble Jewish man like Peter or James.

He didn't follow Jesus like Nathaniel and John, or he didn't follow John the Baptist like Nathaniel and John. Matthew was what you would call scum.

He was a parasite on the Jewish people and no one liked him. So just think of the worst person in your neighborhood, the worst person in your family, and how surprising it would be that Jesus would call them.

[11:32] And that's what Matthew is trying to get across. Matthew's call is remarkable. And Jesus' mercy in calling Matthew is remarkable.

See, Jesus chose Matthew. And praise the Lord, he did, because if he chose Matthew, he can choose all sorts of kinds of people. Jesus overflowed.

Out of his heart, overflowed in mercy towards Matthew. And he knew what kind of man Matthew was. Matthew loved money. He was a sinner, and he was treasuring the things of this world as if they were worth everything.

And he was blind to see what was most important. And Matthew was dying. dying. He didn't know it, but he was dying. His treasures were ashes.

We just had fireworks, and out on our sidewalk, my wife and I lit some of these things. They're called glow worms or snakes. And if you've seen them, you light them, and this big ash snake comes out of them.

[12:40] That's sort of what Matthew had. He had an ash snake there. And you know what my wife did? She went out with the broom, swept it up, and it was gone.

That's what Matthew's treasures were. But Jesus set his eye on Matthew and decided that he's going to do him good.

So with Matthew's call, there came something more than just the words. There came power. And it was invincible power. And so Matthew left everything and followed Jesus.

So this is Matthew's own account. And Matthew likes to play himself down in the account. He likes to downplay what really happened, what his response was.

And he simply says he got up and followed him. That's what we have in our text. Actually, in our text it says Matthew, but in the Greek it says he got up and followed him.

[13:38] And he left everything. Luke tells us that he left everything. Matthew doesn't include that.

See, in an instant, reality focused in Matthew's mind. And he saw his treasures. He saw what he was living for. And he saw Jesus.

And he realized, none of this stuff is worth it. And he got rid of it. It turned to stone before his eyes.

And he left it. And he followed Jesus. See, Matthew saw the pearl of greatest price.

And what happened when the man saw the pearl of greatest price? He sold everything just to get it, just to have it. And if you think about it, and as I thought about it and pondered it, you know where those parables are found?

They're only found in one place, and that's Matthew. Because do you think maybe, just maybe, that that really described what Matthew found in Jesus? He found something that was worth more than the whole world.

[14:47] So he gladly left everything he had and followed Jesus. so see the mercy of Jesus. Was Matthew looking for the pearl of greatest price?

No, he wasn't. But Jesus uncovered it for him. Jesus showed himself and then gave Matthew the very eyes to see Jesus for what he was. Jesus gave himself to Matthew, and so Matthew gained the whole world, and he became rich beyond all imagination.

he was completely unworthy, and he was completely unexpected. But Jesus saves the unexpected. He saves the unexpected. So now, think about the most godless man at where you work. Think about the most wicked neighbor you have.

Think about that person in your family that you could not possibly imagine Jesus saving. And Jesus can save them. Jesus can save them.

[15:54] Jesus has mercy on sinners. So can you dare to hope that Jesus will have mercy on that person? Yeah, you can.

You can. Jesus' mercy is not bound by what we think. Jesus' mercy isn't bound by the amount of sin that there is in a person's life.

It's not stopped by a hard heart. No matter how hard the heart is, Jesus has the key and he opens the door and he'll come in when he wants.

He's the king. He's the king of every heart no matter how sinful. So but back to our text. Matthew was over flowing with joy at what has happened because of Jesus' mercy.

And so Matthew decides to throw a huge party. Matthew again downplays his role and his extravagance. In the NIV it says they were at Matthew's house but in the original he doesn't even say where the dinner is.

[17:02] He just says there was this dinner. But Luke tells us it was at Matthew's house and it was a great banquet. banquet. So if we walk through the doors of this banquet we're going to see our second point and that is Jesus' great mercy towards all kinds of sinners.

See Matthew's big heart his extravagance and showing his thanks to Jesus is only matched by Jesus' huge heart for sinners.

So Matthew's deciding I'm going to throw this going away party. I'm not a tax collector anymore. I'm following Jesus. And he's so excited about Jesus. Can you just imagine the invitations?

It would be like come and see why I left it all. Come and see him who I found everything that I've ever wanted. It's out with the old. It's in with the new.

You have to come and see Jesus. So Matthew invites all of his friends. The question is, well, who are Matthew's friends?

[18:14] Well, when you're a low life like Matthew, that's what kind of friends you have. You have low life friends. And so his tax collector buddies came.

All the sinners came. And what does that mean? It means all the people that had really bad reputations. They had jobs that necessarily meant that they sinned.

So you have the prostitutes there, because that's what kind of people Matthew would have hung out with. You have sort of the organized crime there, because well, if you're going to be extortionary, you need friends.

And so your mafia buddies, or at least your first century Jewish version of it, are there. And can you imagine it?

Can you just imagine it? It was a who's who of the wicked people in Capernaum. And if you think about it, it should make you almost giddy with excitement.

[19:12] And I'll tell you why. Because someone else was at that party. Jesus was. And Jesus was eating with them. And he's sitting down with them and talking with them.

He's telling them all about himself. And it's all those lost sheep in one room. it was a field day for Jesus. Wasn't he worried about being defiled?

Wasn't he worried about his own reputation? Wasn't he ruined that, oh, if I am seen with these people, that, oh, there goes all my ministry?

The answer is no, no, no. Jesus was totally in his element. He was having mercy on all these people, telling them all about how life can be found in him.

And you know that in that culture, if you sit down and eat with someone and have table fellowship with them, that's showing a lot of solidarity.

[20:15] That's showing real friendship and fellowship. It means that, you know, we're together in what we're doing. And Jesus was doing these people wonderful and unimaginable good.

So, I can imagine that Matthew is there, too. And he's telling everyone about what he's going to be doing from now on. Wouldn't you? If you just got called full-time to be with Jesus, every day, I get to be with Jesus day after day, and he's had mercy on me.

Do you guys remember what I was? He had mercy on me. And you just have to think that God was so glorified that day. It must have been wonderful.

And when we get to heaven, we'll have to ask Matthew, what was going on? It was so wonderful.

So, that's the glory. And with that glory as a backdrop, we see in our stage right, the Pharisees.

They, of course, they didn't go to the party. We can't really imagine them at the party. That's not the way we should read the text. Because they wouldn't be caught dead at a party like this.

[21:34] So, maybe later, after people left or people were exiting or whatever, the Pharisees come up to the disciples and they have a question.

It's not a serious question, but it's an accusation veiled in the form of a question. Why does your teacher eat with the tax collectors and sinners?

So, it's not a real question, it's an accusation of guilt, and it's guilt by association on top of that. Your teacher eats with tax collectors and sinners, he must be defiled just like they are.

Or your teacher eats with the tax collectors and sinners, and so he must think they're really all right. What they do is okay. Well, we don't know what the disciples were saying.

We don't know if they were a little perplexed. Maybe they didn't know what they were doing there. Maybe they were just ashamed. We don't know. Let's hope not.

[22:37] Who knows? But Jesus answers for them. If the disciples couldn't find a good answer, Jesus has the perfect answer to the Pharisees' accusation.

And his answer is final, it's absolute, and when it's all said and done, their heart is exposed for what it is. And Jesus' heart is exposed for what it is.

So with three simple sentences, the matter's cleared up, and Jesus gloriously reveals God's huge heart of mercy.

So let's just read those three verses again. Matthew 9, verse 12. On hearing this, Jesus said, It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

But go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice, for I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. So now we're at our third point.

[23:43] Our third point, Jesus' mercy mission. Jesus' mercy mission. See, at the heart of the Pharisees' accusation is that old proverb that birds of a feather flock together.

So, Jesus, you're hanging out with those people because really that's what you are. You're just like them. You're a glutton. You're godless. You don't know what righteousness is really about.

You don't care at all for living a proper life before God. And Jesus says, you're wrong. You're wrong. And I'll tell you why you're wrong.

Because there can be two reasons why you would want to be with sinners. And the first is, yes, you could be a sinner yourself. And you feel comfortable with them. And the other thing, the other reason, is that if you're a doctor, you have to be with the sick people.

you have to be with them. So a doctor goes to a hospital every day. But is he sick? No. He's going in and out with all the patients.

[24:50] Is he sick? No, he really cares about the patients. It'd be like me going up to Pastor John and saying, oh, I'm so sorry about Carrie. She's in the hospital all the time, isn't she?

Well, she is in the hospital, isn't she? Because she cares for the sick. And so Jesus says, I am with them because I'm a doctor and I can't treat them unless I'm with them.

And the reason I'm with them and not so much with you is because it's the sick that need the doctor, not those who think they're well. So that brings us to understand maybe a little more why this is such great mercy because would does Jesus think sin is appealing?

Does he like sin that he would get up really close to a person and have it in his face? No, he doesn't. He's holy. He's more holy than we can ever imagine.

He's more disgusted with sin than we could even possibly imagine. And yet he's there because he loves them. He loves them and he's having mercy on them.

[26:05] So, how often brothers and sisters, do you get, does mercy overcome your disgust with people? And there is a true, real, holy revulsion with sin.

But if that revulsion is not overcome with mercy, then it's sinful, it's inordinate, it's wrong. so I know how you feel because I feel the same way.

You say to yourself, well, if I get up close to that person and I start being friendly with them and showing them some affection and love or mercy and caring for them, well, people are going to say, you obviously don't think sin is very important.

And that person could draw the wrong conclusion and say, you know, that person, he doesn't care about my sin or his God doesn't care about my sin. And I say, yes, of course, if you never get around to exposing the wound, they're going to think that.

If you never get around to exposing them to the gospel, then they are going to think that. But if you can overcome your revulsion of sin with mercy, then those people can and will come to the gospel as you show mercy to them.

[27:29] And so if you throw a wall around yourself, every time there's really yucky sinners around you, then I ask, how is that like Jesus? How is that like Jesus?

He ate with sinners and he sat with sinners. He was around sinners all the time because he was the great physician and the physician must be with the sick.

So Jesus says, you misinterpret my motives. You misinterpret my motives. You're seeing with the evil eye what I'm doing. You're putting the wrong spin on the whole thing.

And more over, your so-called righteousness that you are so concerned about is not what God has in mind.

And he quotes Hosea 6.6. And that's why I had it read. Hosea 6.6. God says to Israel, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

[28 : 28] Pharisees, you have it all wrong. Just like Israel did. You have it all wrong. You think God is going to be satisfied with just the right worship. Just the right sacrifices.

And so we could apply it to our own day. If our worship is just right and our doctrine is just right, will God be happy with that? Well, if there's no merciful heart behind it, then it's not true worship.

So he says, you Pharisees, go and learn this lesson. In other words, sit and think about this for a while, that God desires mercy, not sacrifice.

So does God want sacrifice alone? No. Does he want proper worship alone? No. And see, without mercy, without a heart that wants to see sinners saved, there is no true worship.

Because our heart and God's heart are far apart. And God is not fooled. We can't really worship. We can't really love God if we're not loving our fellow men.

[29 : 39] And we can't really say that we're worshiping God if never, ever, the words come out of our mouth to sinners to tell them how wonderful God is.

Our worship isn't coming up to the standard if we never tell other people about Jesus. And it also says, if you never show mercy, it's because most likely God has never shown mercy to you.

You don't know God's mercy. you haven't seen the enormity and the depth of your own sin if you can say that person doesn't have a chance, but I do.

It's not true. So, Jesus gives his final reason for eating with sinners. And he says, for I have not come to call the righteous. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.

I don't think there's any sweeter words in the whole Bible. And as I think about it, I don't know how many times these words have comforted me.

[30 : 48] I have not come to call the righteous but sinners. So, Jesus, why are you there? Why are you in this banquet with all these sinners? It's because that's who I came to call.

I'm not calling the self-righteous. I'm calling the sinners. These people, the ones that know they're sinners, that's why I'm going to the cross.

That's why I came to earth. These are the ones I've come to save. I don't call the righteous, the self-righteous. I'm coming to call the sinners. And so, you mean, Jesus, that you're calling the unlovable to repentance, the ones that they're not good in any way?

You're calling the sexual immoral, like the prostitutes? You're calling the ungodly, the people that don't care. They just don't care about God.

You're calling them the liars and the cheats, the ungrateful, the disobedient. You're calling them the blind ones who just don't see anything.

[31 : 56] And Jesus says, yes, yes, yes, yes, and yes. So, Grace Fellowship, this is good news for you because each and every one of you, from the back row to the front row and everyone in between, is a sinner.

And the very reason Jesus came was to call sinners to save the ungodly. So, God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.

See, Jesus' mission, the reason he's coming to earth, is a reflection of his own heart. And it's a reflection of God's heart, of the Father's heart.

See, God's heart is open. It's open to all those who know themselves to be sinners. God's heart's open for all those who aren't even looking for them.

Who aren't even looking for them. Jesus is merciful in coming to the earth and facing trials and difficulties. He's merciful in getting up close with the sinner and having dealings with them, like the woman at the well.

[33 : 18] And his mercy took him to the cross. It wasn't just from heaven to earth. It was from the earth to the cross that Jesus goes in his pursuit of mercy and his great desire to show mercy to sinners.

He's going to the cross. And it was at the cross where God's mercy disappeared. It disappeared for Jesus.

And God demanded a sacrifice. Demanded a sacrifice. And so Christ was loaded with all the sins of all of his people.

and there was no mercy found for him. But God demanded the penalty to be paid. And so at the moment, at that moment when justice struck out at Jesus, something very peculiar happened. God's mercy came to me, came to you, and it blazed out to all of God's people. And see, the only way that these sick people could be healed is if the doctor dies.

[34 : 27] The only healing was death. The only healing was for the servant to be wounded. And that's why Isaiah 53 says he was wounded for our transgressions.

So what a very peculiar doctor we have. Very strange. Our cure demands that he be cursed. And our healing demands his death.

And so at the cross, mercy triumphs. And even at the cross, Jesus renders the most perfect worship and obedience in his pursuit of mercy.

And Jesus came to call sinners. And he called them from the cross. And thank God he did.

Because that's what I am. So what have we seen so far?

we've seen Jesus surprising mercy to Matthew. Matthew was the tax collector and he found the pearl of greatest price.

[35 : 30] We've seen Jesus utter remarkable amazing mercy towards all those tax collectors and sinners. And he ate with them and he pursued them.

And we see Jesus' mercy in this great mission that he came to earth and he went to the cross. So what are our possible responses?

This is the fourth point. What are our possible responses to this mercy? Well, if you don't know anything about Jesus' mercy, and I mean, you've never tasted it for yourself, then why don't you come and taste and see the just how merciful, just how good Jesus is.

There's no reason to clean yourself up. There's no reason to wait any longer, because Jesus saves sinners. And if you're a sinner, then he wants to save you.

There's no reason to put anything on order, to have your life all fixed up, because if you're a sinner, Jesus saves you. And if you think, I'm just too bad, well, Jesus saves sinners.

[36 : 50] And if that's what you are, Jesus is out to save you. And so if you're a young person, and you're seeing people all around you coming to faith in Christ, I have a question.

What are you waiting for? What are you waiting for? It's for you that Jesus came. It was for you that Jesus calls.

And so everyone here knows that if you have tasted Christ's mercy, and you have seen Jesus has been good to you, then you know, and you could tell them that we were sinners.

We were sinners when Jesus found us. We were like Matthew, we're sitting in our sin. And Jesus found us. And he sought us out.

So tonight, you could go home and you could wake up and follow Jesus if you would just come to him. There's no hesitation on his part.

[37 : 58] There's absolutely no hesitation on his part. He stands ready for you. The mercy is for you. So come. Come to him.

That's one possible response. It's a very good response. Another response is that you could walk out of here if you don't know Christ.

You could walk out of here and say, I made it through that one. Now I can do what I really want to do. I mean, I have my friends and you will have your friends and you'll have your family and you'll have your toys and you'll have your job and your life and your TV and you'll have it all.

You'll have life by its tail, but you'll miss life itself. You'll miss life itself and your whole life will turn to ashes, just like those fireworks and God will brush them away and there'll be nothing left for you.

The pleasures that you seek are empty and they're going to leave you completely unhappy because when God's wrath comes, you will be naked and broken and you'll have nothing.

[39 : 20] So the question is, do you think God forgets? Do you think God forgets a single sermon? Do you think God is going to forget what you heard here? You will be held accountable for what you hear.

You will be held accountable for what you've heard. And God will require everything that He has given you. He will demand it back. So you could pour out God's own anger on top of your head.

Just pour it out and you could lose everything if you ignore Jesus' mercy. That's another possible response. All I have to say is don't do that.

Don't do it. Grace fellowship. So what do we do with this message of Jesus' mercy?

Jesus said to Matthew, follow me. Jesus said to Matthew, follow me. So I'm asking, are we following Jesus? Jesus, what do we see? We see Jesus showing extravagant mercy to the unexpected.

[40:29] So do you have your eyes on the unexpected? unexpected. There's that girl at my work and she is really, really unexpected. The half of it has not been told. But you know what?

I know that Jesus can save her in a day, in an instant, in a second. so we could hear that message and we could just water it down.

We could hear Jesus say, follow me, follow me, and showing mercy. And we could water it down. We could kill it with a thousand conditions. And there could be something that gets into our heart that keeps Christ's mercy pent up inside of us.

We could just start focusing too much on sin and say, they're just too sinful. We talk a lot about sin here, but if our view of sin is this high, then the Bible teaches us, and this passage teaches us, that Christ's mercy has to be way up here.

His mercy is greater than all of our sin. And so I struggle with this. If you struggle with this, you're not alone. I look at someone and I think, yeah, that's not good.

[41:48] That person's far too gone. And, you know, me and my big brain, I can figure out who God has elected and know what God has planned. It's clear that this person's too far gone.

Christ can't save him. And this message strikes me in the face and smacks me around a bit. And I realize, you know what? Jason Webb, you don't know the slightest clue what I have planned for anyone.

And so why are you acting like it? This word that we find in Matthew tells us, clear as day, none of those secret things, clear as day, that God is merciful.

And he's full of surprising grace for the most unexpected. we could water it down in another way.

And we could say, yes, I agree. Evangelism is very important. But we need to guard against anything that would take the place of worship as the focus of our lives.

[42:59] grace. This evangelism is true. This thing about mercy, it is true. And it's good, but it has to have a subordinate! place.

I mean, we know it's a really close second. It's very important, but God's worship must come first. So, Grace Fellowship Church, it's soli Deo gloria.

That's the motto, and that's what we should stick with. Right doctrine, reverent worship comes first, and evangelism can come a close second. Well, God doesn't see it that way.

God doesn't see it that way. There's no worship without mercy to men. There's no sacrifice of praise if our heart isn't united with Jesus' heart in this pursuit of sinners.

And so, if we miss at this point, if we get everything right, and we miss at this point, then we've stepped out of the boat and into the water, and we're no longer following Jesus.

[44:09] Jesus' words are good in this place, that our righteousness must, it must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

They could do right doctrine. They could do right worship, but they had no mercy, and they missed it all. But Hebrews says, I am confident of better things for you.

So the last response, the best response for Grace Fellowship is that we embrace Christ's mercy. We embrace it for ourselves, and we embrace it for others.

And we embrace it in all of its glory, and all of its, I wonder that you can't believe that God has mercy on people like that?

And if we embrace it, brothers and sisters, there's going to be a few things about us. When we sin, and we are sinners still, when we sin, we're going to take our sin to Christ, because Jesus calls the sinners, not the righteous.

[45:17] So we don't have to hide our sin. We don't have to cover it up. We don't have to justify it. We're going to do something very bold, something very crazy, if you will. We're going to take our sin to the holy God and ask him to forgive us.

We're going to bring it into his presence and ask him to forgive us for Jesus' sake, because Jesus came to call sinners. And that's what you and I are.

And sometimes Satan attacks us. And you know that. Satan will attack us and say, how can you call yourself a Christian? How many times are you going to sin like that?

How many times? A hundred times? A thousand times? You've done it enough. There's no way. There's no way Jesus is accepting you this time. Well, we fight back. We fight the lie with the truth. And the truth is that I have not come to call the righteous with sinners. I call the sinners not the righteous.

[46:20] And so we can embrace Jesus' mercy for ourselves and preach the gospel to ourselves day and day, day after day. And we can embrace Jesus' mercy for others.

So let me ask you, do you believe in divine appointments? Because this week, you're going to go out in the world and I'm going to go out in the world and we're going to be rubbing shoulders with some really big sinners.

You know, you probably live with some. You're going to be rubbing shoulders with them. And Jesus has mercy on sinners, so speak the gospel to them. He's the king.

You don't have to worry about the power. You don't have to worry about his willingness, because his heart is beating. And it says, mercy, mercy, I want mercy.

So when we see a big sinner, when we see a surprising, unexpected candidate for God's grace, we don't overthink the situation.

[47:19] We don't do what I do and overthink it and say, they're going the wrong way. They're too far gone. It's hopeless. Are they sinners?

That's the question. Are they sinners? Jesus saved sinners. He can save that one no matter how bad he is. So we need to get in there with them.

And we need to tell them about Jesus. Show them some love. And act like Jesus towards these people. people. So I talked about the bridge at the very beginning.

What's the bridge from me to that girl? What's that bridge from you to that other person? What's the bridge from Christ to us?

It's mercy. It's mercy. And so we need to have more faith in God's mercy. So pray for me. Pray for one another that we will trust in Christ's mercy more and that we would be bold and kind witnesses for Christ.

[48:25] Let's pray for that now. Jesus, there is no measure to how much you are worth.

You are greater than all the world. In you we find the sweetest pleasures, the most lasting treasures on this whole earth.

We have found mercy from you. We were separated from you and you came and you sought us. We were on the hills far away. We had no ear, no heart for our shepherd's voice and yet you came and picked us up and you brought us into your fold and we are only beginning to taste your loving heart.

We pray Holy Spirit come. Honor your word that was preached tonight. Honor it in some young person's heart, some older person's heart.

Will you show yourself mighty and merciful this very night to their salvation, to your glory, that you would just make Jesus look good, love, would stand in awe at how great a love we have in Christ Jesus.

[49:52] Father, thank you that you are calling sinners. You are calling them to your Son by your Spirit. And we pray, Father, will you call sinners to yourself? Will you give us more of Jesus' heart, that those who believe would act like Jesus more, that we would love sinners like Jesus loves sinners?

We find in our heart that Pharisaical heart that wants to put our ducks in a row, but we don't have any mercy. Will you get rid of that Spirit, drive it from our hearts with the example of Jesus, with the power of the Holy Spirit?

Will you help us to praise you by speaking the truth and love to those who need it? Overcome fear with love. Overcome doubt with faith.

And will you bring great honor to yourself, to the exaltation of Jesus Christ. That's what we pray for, and it's in his name. Amen.