

I Desire Mercy Not Sacrifice

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[0:00] First, we'll be reading the story of the calling of Matthew in verses 9-13, and then we're! going to chapter 12 and read a passage from there. So first, Matthew chapter 9, verse 9.

As Jesus went on from there, 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. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? And 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. Then please turn over to chapter 12. Matthew chapter 12. We'll read verses 1-14.

At that time, Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, look, your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath. He answered, haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the law that on the Sabbath, the priests and the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?

I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

And he said to them, if any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep? Therefore, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Then he said to the man, stretch out your hand. And he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Class is in session. And as it comes to a close, the rabbi says to his hearers, here's your homework assignment. Go and learn what it means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

[3:23] Do you know what that means? I desire mercy, not sacrifice. According to Jesus, it's crucial that we do understand it. So my assignment this morning is to tell you what it means, to explain it, to illustrate it, to apply it. And your assignment together with me is to hear Christ's voice in his word and to obey it.

Now here's a faithful saying, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Bad sinners, even the worst of sinners.

Bad sinners. And some of the real bad ones in Jesus' days on earth were the tax collectors. These were Jews who were collecting the hard-earned money of their countrymen and giving it to the Roman Empire that ruled over them. And usually, as everyone knew, they collected more than what they owed and pocketed the difference.

And so they were using their position to enrich themselves at the expense of their own countrymen. We can understand then why tax collectors were some of the most hated people in Israel.

And in our scripture reading, we found them lumped together with sinners, didn't we? That's often the case in the Gospels. We read of tax collectors and sinners.

[4:51] One place in Matthew 21, they're lumped together with prostitutes. Tax collectors belonged to the lowest rung on the moral ladder of society.

They were the real bad sinners. They were the people of low reputation, the very scum of the earth. And Pharisees treated them as if they had spiritual Ebola.

They avoided all contact with them, lest they should get the spiritual cooties from them and become defiled in some ways. They're under God's judgment for their sins.

Let them go to hell. They deserve it. How different was Jesus' attitude toward the tax collectors? How different his behavior.

He came to save such sinners. You know, he stopped in Jericho to save the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus. And in our passage that we just read, he saved another tax collector, whom he even chose to be one of his 12 apostles, Matthew.

[6:02] And we read that in Matthew 9 and how Matthew was so thrilled to now know Christ in a saving way that he threw a great party in Jesus' honor and he invited all kinds of people, but especially his old tax collector friends.

And they showed up in great numbers, we're told. And with them, a lot of other sinners. And Jesus was eating with them and he was talking to them.

And you know who else showed up? The ubiquitous Pharisees. They're everywhere. They seem to be everywhere that Jesus went. The religious Gestapo, the fault finders.

And they never had trouble finding something to poke at in Jesus. Look at him over there eating with these moral lowlifers.

And so their question was aimed at Jesus, though spoken to his disciples. In Matthew 9, 11, he says, they said to the disciples, Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?

[7:13] Their intended meaning is shame on him. He ought to keep his distance from such people. Doesn't he know better? And since their words were meant for him, Jesus answers them.

And it's in his answer he explains why it is that he moves towards sinners rather than away from them like the Pharisees. It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

For I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners. What would you think of a doctor who would only stay in the company of healthy people?

Whenever a sick person came anywhere near him, he's backing up and he's vanishing. He will not be with a sick person.

Well, it's a worthless doctor because a doctor by definition, isn't he? Isn't he all about the business of helping the sick? And in the same way, Jesus says, if you would understand why I am moving towards sinners, then you must know who I am and why I've come.

[8:28] I am the savior of sinners. And I'm all about the business of saving sinners. That's why I'm here. I'm the great physician sent to heal sin-sick souls.

I've come all the way from heaven to make house calls, not at the home of the righteous who don't need to be saved, but sinners who don't deserve to be saved.

Now, he drew near to sinners, not to hobnob, but to heal them.

Not to fraternize with them and approve their behavior, but to meet their greatest need of salvation from their sins. Isn't it good for us that Jesus came to save sinners and not righteous people?

Because the Bible clearly says we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. So good for us that Jesus has come to call sinners.

[9:36] And compared, or the difference between one sinner and another is minuscule compared to the difference between all of us and an infinitely holy God.

And yet he did not keep his distance, but he came to us in Jesus Christ. He humbled himself and became poor to enrich us with everlasting health and life.

And so it was then right there at the party that Jesus gave these Pharisees some homework to do. Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

Now, these were the Pharisees who searched the scriptures, and yet they had altogether missed what God meant by those words. I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

And so Jesus sends them home to study, to find out its meaning, because in finding out what it means, then they will see that Jesus is the one who is in step with God and not them.

[10:54] Rather, they are the ones to be condemned, not him. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. The importance of those words can be seen in our Lord's repetition of them.

That's why I had two passages of scripture read for us. We see those words repeated by Jesus later on. And we know that the four gospels do not give us all the words that Jesus said.

John says if everything was written that he did, could the world even hold the books that could be written? No, what we have is just a selective sampling of the things that Jesus said. And yet, in that selective sampling, we find him repeating these words. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. And so we can believe if the sampling has him twice, that no doubt that was often on Jesus' lips, as day by day he was found teaching the people.

And so there was another occasion, not just at Matthew's party, but another occasion in Matthew chapter 12. Obviously, Matthew, the tax collector, was impressed by these words.

[12:10] He repeats, he records them. In Matthew 12, one day, Jesus and his disciples are just strolling along, going through a grain field on the Sabbath.

And as they're walking along, his hungry disciples grab a handful of grain and rub it in their hands and eat it.

And some Pharisees were there and saw it. Here they are again. They're always here. Did they just pop up out of the grain suddenly?

Aha, we caught you! Look, Jesus! Look, Jesus! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath, like some hidden undercover police car, and suddenly it's upon us.

Here they are, these fault-finding Pharisees. Your disciples are doing what's unlawful on the Sabbath. Now, it is true that we are to do all of our work in six days, and on the seventh, we are to rest from our usual labor in order to give ourselves to worship and service of God.

[13:21] But the rabbis had drawn up dozens of additional strict rules on what was forbidden on the Sabbath. And so we see in this passage some of those rules.

Plucking a few heads of grain as you're walking through a field was equated with harvesting your crops and rubbing them together to get the chaff out before you popped it in your mouth.

Well, that's threshing, and so that's forbidden too. And you see how they had pressed the law of God beyond its intended meaning.

And they had many other such laws that turned the Sabbath into a great hair-splitting hardship for the people. These were the traditions that were added to God's law and were being pressed by the Pharisees as if they had the same binding authority as the Scriptures themselves.

And so they charged the disciples as guilty of harvesting and threshing on the Sabbath, and Jesus is guilty by association for not stopping his men. Well, Jesus responds in several ways.

[14:29] He starts with two historical examples. Haven't you read? That cuts deep to someone who spends their time reading the Scriptures. Haven't you read?

About David. King David. Before he was king, when he was running from Saul, he and his men were running and they came into the house of God. And there they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests to eat.

Those twelve loaves of bread that were daily set out before the Lord and each day were replaced with fresh bread. Well, what happened to the old bread? Only the priests could eat it.

But David and his men ate it that day. How they ate. Haven't you read that? Jesus is showing that the ceremonial restriction did not apply in cases of necessity.

That God's concern for the hunger of the people trumped his ceremonial restriction. He was concerned about their hunger even in his commands that were given for the ceremonies.

[15:47] He showed that he's more concerned that they eat and live. Jesus demonstrated that concern for people, didn't he? Give them something to eat so that they don't faint as they're going home from our teaching session.

And here we see that God would rather break a ceremonial restriction than to have his anointed king and his men faint with hunger along the way.

The biblical principle is that the Sabbath was never meant to forbid works of necessity. It's necessary for men to eat. Or haven't you read in the law how, secondly, on the Sabbath day, the priests desecrate the day by working in the temple yet are innocent.

That sounds like doublespeak, doesn't it? Again, there was a law that we're supposed to rest on the Sabbath and yet what were the priests doing on the Sabbath? That was perhaps their busiest day and they were doing a lot of work and yet they were not desecrating the Sabbath.

For God never meant for the priests to be idle on the Sabbath day, but to do their work. Why? So that the very purpose of the day, the worship of God's people could take place.

[17:03] And that's why your pastors, even on the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's Day, we work on this day. Why? So that we can fulfill as a congregation one of the purposes of this day, that we join

together in our worship of God.

And so we must grab our rest on another day, like Monday or something. But Jesus is the one who is the true lawgiver. And he gave the law originally about the bread and about the Sabbath.

And he is the one now explaining it. He claims to be greater than the temple. He's the sovereign ruler overall, including Lord of the Sabbath.

He's the one lawgiver and has the true interpretation of it. And he has said that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Man doesn't exist for the day.

The day exists for man, for his good, his benefit, his advantage, for his blessing, not to enslave him. It's for man's health, his happiness, his holiness, by resting from his normal labors and worshipping.

[18:18] And then he rebukes the Pharisees for their hair-splitting legalism that sees no distinction between the work of harvesting and eating a few handfuls of grain.

They pressed the law so far that they missed the whole purpose of the law. It was meant to bless man, not curse them.

Rather, they made it as if the Sabbath was something that man existed for. And regardless of what the effect upon him was, the Sabbath must be obeyed, even down to not eating a handful of grain. And then Jesus said it. He repeated those words that we heard him say at Matthew's party. In verse 7 of chapter 12, If you had known what these words meant, I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

Well, you would have not condemned the innocent. You see what he's saying? In other words, as Lord of the Sabbath, I declare that nothing my disciples have done have violated God's Sabbath law.

[19:27] They're innocent. And by condemning them as guilty, you show that you still don't know what these words mean. I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

Evidently, they still hadn't done their homework. They were delinquent. They hadn't gone and learned what these words meant. So the accusers are the guilty ones.

And their failure to understand this verse, these words of God, keeps getting them into trouble with Jesus. When he later arrived at their synagogue, he found another trap set for him by the Pharisees in Matthew 12, 9 to 14.

And Jesus exposed their pharisaical and hypocritical heart by showing that they had more mercy on their own sheep than they had for this man with a shriveled hand.

He said, Your hearts are shriveled. And you don't care anything about this man with the shriveled hand. But you are so concerned about all the ceremonial laws and you are pressing it so hard that you're saying it's sinful to heal on the Sabbath, to do good on the Sabbath.

[20:42] Oh, so careful about Sabbath restrictions, ceremony of how we keep the law, that you add all your laws about it, and yet you don't even care about this man.

Something's desperately wrong because I desire mercy, not sacrifice. This wasn't the only time Jesus confronted the Pharisees over this issue.

In chapter 23 of Matthew, you find him saying, Woe to you Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices, mint, dill, and cumin, but you have neglected the more important matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former. You blind guides, you strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel. What's he saying?

You major in the minors and minor in the majors. You're so careful to tithe that you actually go out to your garden, herb plants, and for every nine leaves of mint, you put one in the offering plate.

[21:55] Now, don't do that here. I don't know what our deacons would do with mint leaves and cumin and anise. That's how far they pressed it, you see. But as for the weightier matters of the law, the more important, the major things like justice, mercy, and faithfulness, you don't give two cents about these things.

In fact, you're stealing from old widows. You're stealing from your parents and what should have gone to care for them, you call Corbin.

and you fail to treat people with justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You're so focused and concerned that you're straining out gnats that get into your cup of lemonade and so focused on the gnats that you drink down a camel that gets into the cup.

You neglect the major things like loving people even while you are fastidious about the little things like tithing mint leaves.

Such a disproportionate concern for rules and ritual ceremonies and external actions but neglecting a heart of love for God and for their neighbor is what Jesus is ever condemning in these Pharisees, concerned to clean the outside of the cup when inside it was full of greed and self-indulgence.

[23 : 34] Yes, these are the men to whom our Lord Jesus says, go and learn what this means. I desire mercy not sacrifice. They weren't the first to hear those words. God himself spoke those words to the whole nation of Israel through his prophet Hosea 800 years earlier.

But our Lord Jesus sees the same thing in the Pharisees. The same heart that was 800 years earlier seen in the whole nation. He sees it in these Pharisees and he says, if the shoe fits, wear it. I desire mercy not sacrifice. So let's turn back to those words in Hosea chapter 6. It's right after Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea toward the end of your Old Testament.

Hosea chapter 6 and verse 6. I need to warn you about Hosea as we learned when we preached through this book. He does not mince words.

He charges the nation of Israel as the unfaithful harlot wife of Jehovah. She had not lived up to her marriage covenant with the Lord. Though he was faithful to her, she walked out on him and went after other lovers and gave herself to idols.

[24 : 52] and other gods. And her failure was a failure of covenant love. She did not keep covenant with her God. She did not, she was not faithful.

She was not steadfast in her love and devotion to the Lord. and it also had its expressions in her actions toward men.

This love is to be expressed toward God and toward men. First, they did not love God. They forsook him and forgot him. They no longer knew the Lord or acknowledged him. They refused to trust and obey him.

They trusted in themselves and other nations. They're walled cities. They look for help everywhere but in God. Him they forgot and they rebelled against his commands.

They didn't love God. But that was matched by their not loving their fellow man. And you read the book of Hosea and you find there was no mercy in their dealings with each other. There was no love and faithfulness and kindness to neighbor.

[25 : 59] Chapter 4 and verse 1, Hear the word of the Lord you Israelites because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land. There's no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land.

There's only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery. They break all bonds and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Instead of mercy and love to their neighbor they took advantage of them and oppressed the weak and refused them justice.

So that gives you a picture of what's going on in Israel. No love toward God, no love toward men and yet, and here's the big and yet, for all their wickedness they kept up their sacrifices to the Lord. They kept going through the ceremony of sacrificing to Jehovah. The outward forms of worship must go on. They maintained them in their own perfunctory and mechanical way.

They could even be sticklers for certain ceremonial precision. And they think that by throwing God the bone of their outward worship he should be satisfied as if all their unfaithfulness is to be fixed with some sacrifice being offered.

[27 : 16] Well, they go on living for themselves. They couldn't be more wrong. Hosea says, they offer sacrifices given to me and they eat the meat but the Lord is not pleased with them.

Hosea 8.13 And now here in our text, Hosea 6.6, God tells them. He tells his unfaithful harlot wife what he really is after.

Not the sacrifices and all these other. I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.

Now what does he mean he does not desire sacrifice? After all, didn't God require sacrifice? Didn't he command it? Well, of course he did.

So this is not an absolute statement or we'd have to cut out the book of Leviticus and other passages that tell us that he commanded Israel to make sacrifices, animal sacrifices.

[28 : 16] So it's not an absolute statement, I don't desire sacrifice at all. No, what he means is that what I desire is not mere sacrifice.

As if that's all that matters to me, as if that's what matters most to me, as if that's what I'm really after from you people is your animals on my altar.

No, what I'm after is your heart. I'm after your heart. Give me your heart. A heart of mercy.

The word there. I desire mercy. I desire hesed. And we've had messages on that Hebrew word. It's covenant love. It's steadfast love.

It's faithfulness. Faithfulness to God and faithfulness to man. Love to God and love to man. That's what I'm after.

[29 : 14] I'm after faithful, steadfast love, mercy. A heart that knows me and acknowledges me with personal relationship. But they give him sacrifices and burnt offerings and withhold their affections and their love and faithfulness.

That's like you would go out and ignore God all week and stamp all over his commandments, trespassing and breaking them and then coming to church on Sunday and putting some money in the offering box and singing the hymns and listening to preaching and praying along with the one praying and telling yourself as you go home, God ought to be happy with me.

I've balanced out the scale of all that I did this week that was bad. Now I've gone in and sacrificed to the Lord. I've worshipped the Lord. Lord. And he says to us, I desire loving faithfulness to me, not mere church attendance.

And I desire kindness and mercy to your fellow men, not mere offerings at church. Not at all meaning that church attendance and generous giving are not something he wants, commands, and even delights in when the heart is in it.

But to make clear that you can have these outward forms of religion and rituals and ceremonies and you can do them impeccably. And all the while, your heart is in another place.

[30 : 44] You are loving yourself and that's why you don't love God and why you don't love your neighbor. And that's the meaning behind this statement. I desire chesed, mercy, love, not sacrifice.

Now, if this was just an isolated text here in Hosea 6-6, we might excuse the Pharisees for not knowing what it means. I mean, there it is, hidden out way back at the end of their Old Testament in this one obscure place.

Well, we can understand. But no, it's not just here. It was found throughout their Old Testament scriptures. It was a predominant sin. It's a major theme of the prophets.

It's found in many, many places. It had been a common misunderstanding of the way man thinks about God. Proud thoughts to think that he can fix his huge problem with a little meat on the altar.

That he can manipulate God with some religious ceremony or good work done. Now, that was something that often stirred God's anger and brought his stiffest rebukes and judgment.

[31 : 54] So you read in Isaiah, the very opening chapter of Isaiah as he sent to the people of Judah. And what are they doing? Well, they're murdering each other.

They're taking advantage of each other. All kinds of sins, denying justice to the weak. And yet, they keep up the sacrifices. And God says, your loveless worship is a repulsive mockery and sham.

I'm sick of it. I hate it. I can't bear it on any more. Stop bringing meaningless sacrifices and offerings. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong and learn to do right.

Seek justice. Encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless. Plead the case of the widow. Later, in the same prophet, 29, 13, he talks about their worship.

Oh, how they came into the sanctuary and sang all the songs of Zion and said all the right words in prayer. This is what God says.

[33 : 00] These people come near to me with their mouth and they honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. Someone said the difference between heaven and hell is 12 inches.

Lip religion and heart religion. Do you have heart religion? Israel didn't and God was fed up with their worship and he's saying I desire mercy, covenant faithfulness, love, not mere sacrifice.

You remember how that was proven to King Saul. God gave him clear instructions, go completely wipe out the Amalekites, every living thing and so Saul went and he spared the king and some of the best cattle and when he's exposed by the Lord's prophet Samuel, what does he say?

Well he excuses himself. Well we kept a few of the best cattle but they're for sacrifice. Oh, will that justify his disobedience?

Not being faithful to God, not keeping covenant with God because we're going to sacrifice to God.

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

[34 : 19] To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams. What I'm really after, Saul, is your faithful obedience to me, not your offerings.

I'm after your heart's love because if you love me, you will obey me. King David knew it even after falling into the sin of adultery and murder.

There in Psalm 51 verses 16 and 17 as he's confessing his sin to God, he says, you do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it. You don't take pleasure in burnt offerings.

No, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. David got it. What God is after is not fat on the altar, meat on the altar.

He's after a broken, humble heart that will look away from self and not defend self but condemn self and look to God's mercy and hang upon God's mercy.

[35 : 24] It's not the sacrifice that is the most important thing. It's the heart. Proverbs 21, 3, to do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

He has shown you, O man, Micah 6, what the Lord requires. not thousands of rams but to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

It's all throughout the prophets. He's after chesed, covenant faithfulness. It's first God's covenant faithfulness to us.

His chesed, His love for us, His mercy upon us, His compassion and pity upon us, His faithful, undying, covenant love.

And that love is then to be returned to Him in covenant faithfulness and love and is to be poured out upon my fellow men with mercy and pity and compassion and faithfulness and love.

[36 : 32] Remember what David did. He showed the chesed of God, the same chesed that God had shown to him, he showed to Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth, kindness, undeserved kindness and he poured it out because he had received it.

So there's always two directions to our chesed, our mercy as it's translated for us. I desire mercy, I desire love. There's always two directions, Godward, manward.

John says, the two stand or fall together because if anyone says, I love God yet hates his brother, he's a liar.

For anyone who does not love his brother whom he's seen cannot love God whom he's not seen.

And he's given us this command, whoever loves God must also love his brother. And so this passage in Hosea and its repetition from the lips of our Lord in the New Testament remind us that it's quite possible to be very rigid about the outward matters of the law, the things we do and don't do, and yet to miss the whole point of the law which is love.

To major in other things rather than majoring in the main thing which is love. For love is the fulfillment of the law, Romans 13, 10.

[37 : 56] 1 Timothy 1, 5 tells us that the end goal of the command is love. What is it that God's law is aiming at? It's aiming that we love God and our neighbor.

So I have to ask you, is everything you're learning about God bringing you to love him more?

Bringing you to love your neighbor more.

If not, you're missing the whole point, the end, the goal, the purpose for which God speaks to us. It's possible with a strict adherence to some of God's outward laws to miss the whole spirit of the law which is love and to deal with others concerning the law in an unloving, nitpicking, fault-finding way.

You see, we can actually forget what the two greatest commandments of the law are. One day, a teacher of the law asked Jesus, what is the greatest commandment in the law?

Which of all the commands, which is the most important? The most important one is this, Jesus answered, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

[39 : 08] Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. There it is. And then Jesus gave him more than what he asked for. And he said, and the second is like it.

Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater command than these. Well said, teacher, the man replied.

You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart and with all your understanding and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself, listen, is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

He got it. He had done his homework. He had gone and learned what it means when God says, I desire mercy, love, not sacrifice.

And Jesus says, you are not far from the kingdom of God. That showed it. He had learned by grace. What is it that God is after?

[40 : 15] No, it's not like the Pharisees. All this persnickety obedience about the fine things, the additional rules, all of this. Meanwhile, the gaping hole of a shriveled up unloving heart.

Now, I desire mercy, not sacrifice. How does this apply to us? We don't offer sacrifices of animals like they did.

How does it apply to us in our dealing, first of all, with sinners? Well, we should never move away from them in condescending judgment, but always move toward them in mercy to see them saved by Jesus Christ.

Christ. These words challenge our hearts toward sinners. And unless we remember what we were before Christ saved us, and remember what we still are, sadly, after Christ has saved us, our hearts toward sinners will be as shriveled up as prunes and as Pharisees at Matthew's party, rather than swelling and enlarged with mercy and grace like the Lord Jesus and Matthew.

These words challenge our hearts towards sinners, our neighbors who are sinners. And these words challenge our expectations of sinners. Do we expect sinners to live moral lives before we will have dealings with them, like the Pharisees at Matthew's party?

[41 : 44] We must not expect sinners to live like saints. They're not. They're still sinners. So we expect sinners to act like sinners.

Kids, are you surprised when you see a bird fly or a fish swim? No. Why not? Because that's their nature. It's their nature for a bird to fly and a fish to swim.

Then we should not be surprised when we see sinners sin. That's their nature. Let's remember if they're lost sinners that they will think and desire as sinners.

They will choose and act and behave as sinners. That's why they need our Savior. Savior. So don't expect them to live like believers who have the Holy Spirit within.

No, they're still slaves of sin without the Holy Spirit's power within. Now, it doesn't excuse them. But we shouldn't expect anything different from sinners and their sin should not send us running and retreating away from them, keeping our distance, withholding aggressive kindness, love, and mercy.

[43 : 11] No, Jesus says, go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. Mercy for sinners, for great sinners, for the kind of sinners as were found at Matthew's party.

Now, if you should ever see a bird swimming deep under the water for days or see a bird flying, or a, did I say it right?

If you should ever see a bird swimming deep under the water for days and a fish flying high over the trees, you should be surprised. This is something strange.

This is something supernatural. This is something not natural, is it? And if you should ever see a sinner loving God and loving his neighbor, you should know that the surprising grace, the supernatural salvation of Jesus Christ has come to that sinner.

and his grace that brings salvation teaches sinners to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

[44 : 17] Yes, grace has come there. So I ask you this morning, what sinner, you ask yourself, what sinner am I drawing near to to introduce to my Savior like Matthew did?

What sinner am I eating with like Jesus did to see them healed from sin by the great physician? These words try our hearts towards sinners, but they also apply to our expectation and treatment of other believers.

I find that sometimes believers can be harder on their own people than they are upon lost sinners. And they can treat their fellow believers without love.

Like the Pharisees who were always accusing the disciples in the grain fields. This applies to our expectation and treatment of immature believers.

A few years ago, our dear brother Matthew Brennan, a minister over in Clonmill, Ireland, was visiting us and he told us about a very worldly woman who came to trust in Jesus Christ and was coming along to church.

[45 : 28] One day at church, someone pulled the pastor aside, all upset and in a tizzy and said, Pastor, Pastor, she's outside and she's smoking.

And the pastor said with a calm voice, well, what's she smoking? A cigarette.

And he said, well, praise the Lord because she used to be smoking pot. the grace of God has come and how does he teach us to say no to ungodliness?

Did you move from full-out sinner to full-out saint in one day in the way that you live? Or are you still struggling to learn to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and continually struggling to say yes to self-control, upright, godly living?

And you need to cut your sister some slack. I desire mercy. Not tit-for-tat. Following of your ways.
[46:48] And sometimes they don't do everything the way we do and they don't they don't have all the traditions that we do and we look down our nose. No, I desire mercy not sacrifice.

Well, may the Lord apply it to our hearts as we need it that we would be so filled with God's mercy and love for us that what oozes from our hearts is love, kindness, faithfulness to our God and to man.

Can I say something to you who are still lost in your sin? You know, the Lord Jesus is the same today as he was in the gospels. Oh, his body is in heaven now, but his heart on earth is the same towards sinners.

He's moving towards you, not away from you. Do you know, he sent me to preach this message to you. He sends preachers into the world to speak his word of grace to sinners.

And we stand as in Christ's place and say to you, be reconciled to God. He's still moving towards sinners with offered mercy.

[47:56] He delights to show mercy. Jesus ready, stands to save you, full of mercy, joined with power. He's able, he's willing, doubt no more. So whoever you are, whatever you've done, come to Jesus and he will receive you.

He will forgive you. He will wash you. And he will come into you by his spirit and teach you this whole new life. The way you were meant to live.

The way you were created to live. But what you've been missing out on because you've gone your own way. Number 393 in our hymnals is his invitation to you.

And even as we sing it, you ask him to save you from your sin and he'll do it right there as you cry out to him. 393.

Let's stand as we sing the great mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

[49:02] Oh Lord, you are the one who has taught us what faithful love is and the way that you have loved us unworthy sinners. would you save us then from that love of self that would rob you of that love that we ought to have for you and rob our neighbor of loving them as ourselves.

And would you deliver us from anything of this attitude of the Pharisees? Would you keep our hearts so warmed with your love that it would be love for God and man that would come out of our lives?

Help us to keep the main thing the main thing both in our church and in our individual lives. We ask it through the Lord Jesus and his mighty power in us.

Amen. Amen.