

COMMITTED TO MERCY

Lamentations 3:22-24

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy."

"But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied.

"Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."

"Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son.

Lamentations 3:22-24

22 Because of the Lord's great mercies we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

24 "The lord is my portion says my soul therefore I will hope in him"

I GODS NATURE

A- The bible is Gods self revelation: The bible is what God want us to know about him-

1. Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* Here is the first sentence in the bible: ITS ABOUT GOD

a. This verse reveals to us Gods great power: He's a creator... continue reading; All he has to do is SPEAK

i. He is filled with Wisdom, Power, Author of all Creation.

b. So: In different parts of the bible we learn different things about God.

i. Ps 86:15 *But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*

2. The bible not only reveals who God is... but also who God is in connection to People...

a. Genesis 3:21 *And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

i. Here is the beginning of creation & in failure (rebellion against Gods word {SIN}) We see God is a judge, but we also see God healing the broken relationship- That reveals his MERCY. ...Mercy is the main idea in our passage

B- The idea that God is MERCIFUL towards people is a recurring idea through out the bible.

1. Mercy simply means; *Not getting what we actually deserve.*

2. Mercy is something we all need! V22 *Because of the Lord's great Mercies we are not consumed-*

a. B/c of Gods mercy; He doesn't kill people when they mess up or fail to meet his standard. Thats GOOD for us-

i. Rom 3:23 *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.* Even though we all miss the mark of Gods perfection; He doesn't give us what we deserve!

3. So; In our passage the foundational idea is Gods mercy; We see that from mercy flows other blessings-

4. From Mercy flows compassion: V22 *For his compassions never fail.* God is COMPASSIONATE

a. Compassion means: God can see things from your perspective & feels your pain... Literally hurts for-

i. He has compassion b/c He lived like us: Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.* God feels your pain, because he's felt your pain...

ii. His compassion moves him to Help; Matt 14:14 *Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.* These weren't perfect people he was helping... but from Mercy flows compassion.

iii. Gods greatest act of Compassion was dying on the cross: Rom 5:8 *But God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* While we were still sinning- His payment was/is for you.

5. From Mercy flows Opportunity: V23 *They are new every morning:* They meaning: mercy & compassion are new, or renewed every day.

a. IOW: everyday theres an opportunity to start over with God.

i. Psalm 51:1 *Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.*

1. Here the psalmist writes of getting things right with God. After failure/sin/rebellion/hiding- He gets it right!

b. Mark 16:7 *Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee.*

i. Here Peter denies Jesus during his trial, and here is the offer to get things right, to start over!

5. From Mercy flows the Faithfulness of God. V23 *Great is your faithfulness.* God doesn't give up on us.

a. Heb 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* God is faithful: That means DEPENDABLE: We can depend on His unchanging nature!

6. When Thomas Hooker was dying (*A colonial Puritan*), a friend said to him, "You are going to receive the reward of your labors." He replied, "I am going to receive mercy."

II HUMAN DIFFICULTY WITH MERCY

A- Our difficulty with Gods mercy is that: Our interpretation of mercy is different from Gods... *because we aren't merciful by nature like he is.*

1. When people fail its very natural that; we want to make them pay.

a. Immediately people Seek Revenge- They did this, so I will do... & I am justified!

i. In essence We keep score: & we determine the level of mercy based on the score.

ii. Matthew 5:38-39 *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*

1. Here Jesus corrects a misunderstanding: The law said let justice be served, let the punishment (justice) fit the crime... But people made the saying a guide for personal revenge!

b. So: Gods Mercy can be difficult for us to RECEIVE- because we approach it from a worldly idea

2. When we fail we think God will make us pay! We see only judgement!

a. If Anything negative that happens, immediately we say... *Its because back in... I messed up... so I have to pay*

b. Every choice has a consequence, its not always a judgement, rather a result of what we decided/chose

3. We can have a bias approach with mercy: We change the rules depending on the person-
 - a. They deserve mercy because they're like me, same color or ethnicity, my family etc.
 - i. They don't deserve b/c... They did, said, didn't say, didn't do, aren't like me-
 - b. We change the mercy depending on who is asking- But Gods is consistent
 - i. Rom 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.* Gods Mercy is available to ALL without Bias

B- So; What produces this lack of mercy in us?

1. Pride:
 - a. Pride in a standard of life: You have to reach or meet a certain requirement- & then Ill extend mercy.
 - b. Pride in ourself: In our own eyes we are better than, and anyone not like us we look down
 - c. Prejudice: Only if someone fits into my preferences-
2. Bitterness: Heb 12:15 *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;* Bitterness will hinder our extension of mercy-
 - a. When we withhold grace/mercy/kindness; the sting stays with us, and takes root in us & defiles...
 - i. Like a splinter; it hurts sometimes/gets infected/filled with pus... You gotta get it out!
3. Fear: That we will be walked over... or If I extend mercy then I will not be taken serious... Some fear losing control
 - a. Wasn't this Sauls case against David- No mercy for a FEAR of David!
 - i. 1Sam18:8 *This made Saul very angry. "What's this?" he said. "They credit David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they'll be making him their king!"*

C- The problem; This becomes a hindrance in life

1. It becomes a Burden: A life without mercy is heavy, weighs you down, b/c you carry things your weren't created to carry- *mentally, physically, spiritually.*
2. Others become Stuck: All of life is placed on Hold... because our only focus is *getting them back*
 - a. Saul neglected the Kingdom, People, Territory, Relationship with God... because DAVID
 - i. 1 Samuel 23:8 *Saul mustered his troops for battle and set out for Keilah to lay siege to David and his men.*
3. Wind up LOSING in life: Time/Peace/Trust in Others/Trust in God-
 - a. In life we need MERCY: We need to give it & receive it...
 - b. Mercy in life flows when we receive it from God: Ps 23:6 *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,* These need to flow through us in Life, but that is connected to Jesus.

III GOD OF MERCY

A- God isn't like us... God is God... When it comes to mercy we can depend on him

1. Mercy: Isn't a matter of how we *feel*, It must be based on Gods word. V24 *"The lord is my portion says my soul therefore I will hope in him"*
 - a. So; we must make the decision to BELIEVE: I may not feel *good* but I believe that His mercy is for me
 - b. Make the decision to STAND on His word: Again; there may not be a confidence in me- BUT I STAND on this truth-
 - c. Then we will be able to Move Forward: God gets involved supernaturally-
 - i. IN John 8; we read of the woman caught in adultery...religious are ready to stone her... Jesus says: Let him who is without sin cast the first stone... all leave... Jesus asks where are her accusers... NO ONE... NEITHER DO I- Mercy
2. The more we learn about God, the more sure our faith becomes
 - a. Jonah 4:2 *I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people.*
 - b. Ps 103:8 *The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.*
3. When we start over with Gods Mercy... We start with a brand clean new record.
 - a. Its not a *we'll see, or just wait...* Its immediate-
 - i. Micah 7:19 *He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.* Its gone-
 - b. Is 43:25 *I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*
4. So; How do we receive & learn this kind of Mercy?
 - a. REPENTANCE- Gods mercy isn't a license to sin... *uh-oh God, another slipsy-*
 - b. Repentance is #1 A turning away from sin, and turning to GOD. I choose to STOP disobeying your word.
 - c. #2 Its taking Responsibility of sin: CONFESSION- I am a sinner, I have sinned, I have been wrong, I have failed
 - d. #3 Its a Receiving of Mercy: Gratitude for salvation; V24 *"The lord is my portion says my soul therefore I will hope in him"*
4. God in His Mercy tells us of our sinful state, and warns us (*gives us time & opportunity*) to get things right.
5. In a small cemetery of a parish churchyard in Olney, England, stands a granite tombstone with this inscription: *"John Newton, clerk [pastor], once an infidel & Libertine, a servant of slavers in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the Faith he had long labored to destroy."*
 - a. John Newton wrote the song as a testimony of his life: "Amazing Grace." written in 1772... 248 years later GRACE & MERCY still sounds beautiful-

ALTAR CALL: Maybe you struggle to RECEIVE Mercy/Maybe you struggle to GIVE Mercy