saginaw umc

Mercy > Judgment

Prayer:

Dear God we adore you and give thanks for the ways you have blessed our lives. Thank you for being a promise keeper and a covenant maker. Please help us to live faithfully as covenant people. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen

Connect to God:

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?

Connect to Neighbor:

What good have you done for someone else this week?

Connect to Scripture: James 2:8-13

8 You do well when you really fulfill the royal law found in scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself.[a] 9 But when you show favoritism, you are committing a sin, and by that same law, you are exposed as a lawbreaker. 10 Anyone who tries to keep all of the Law but fails at one point is guilty of failing to keep all of it. 11 The one who said, Don't commit adultery, also said, Don't commit murder.[b]

So if you don't commit adultery but do commit murder, you are a lawbreaker. 12 In every way, then, speak and act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom. 13 There will be no mercy in judgment for anyone who hasn't shown mercy. Mercy overrules judgment.

Connect Text in Context:

James is addressing the issue of favoritism in the community of faith. Apparently, some were treating the rich with honor based upon their wealth and outward appearance while mistreating the poor. He calls them evil-minded judges.

In verse 8, *He says you do well to really fulfill the royal law found in scripture, love your neighbor as yourself*. The bible tells us that God is love. John Wesley says that Love is God's attribute that is above all others. We are created in the image of God. Therefore, as children of God, we should embody love. Mercy is a function of God's unmerited love that we call grace. John Wesley referred to works of mercy as means of grace.

Micah 6:8 says *What does the Lord require of thee, to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.* Micah 7:18 says *The Lord delights in showing mercy.* Therefore, we should show mercy to everyone. We shouldn't pick and choose to who we show mercy. We

should show mercy even to our enemies.

Often we are not impartial, and we are not qualified to judge the conditions of people's hearts; that's God's job. Since we cannot judge the condition of a person's heart, we often find some other criteria to judge them. We then open the door for favoritism.

None of us are perfect. If we take just a moment to look in the mirror, we will see that we all have shortcomings. We all have things that we struggle with. What gives us the right to judge others? Wouldn't you rather be shown mercy than judgment?

A couple of years ago, I dropped my daughter off at her preschool and I set my GPS to the church's address. To my surprise, Google Maps directed me to a different route than what I am used to taking. I passed one school zone and traveled at one appropriate speed but sped up not realizing that I was entering another school zone. I was riding along, thinking about all the things that I needed to accomplish for the day. Then I was pulled from my immersion into thought at the sight of flashing lights. I looked down at my speedometer and surveyed my surroundings and realized I was 8 miles per hour over the speed limit. The police officer asked me if I was aware that I was speeding in the school zone. I apologized to the officer and I told him that I was unfamiliar with the area, and I should have been mindful of the signs. He gave me a warning rather than a ticket. I deserved a ticket. What I did was wrong. I missed the mark, yet I was given mercy.

What is mercy? Mercy is an action that considers the condition and needs of our sisters and brothers. Mercy is not given because of the merit of the recipient. Mercy is given as loving gift, meaning it is a means of grace. People who give mercy to others are channels of God's grace. **In Methodism, works of mercy include:**

Individual Practices: Doing good, visiting the sick and prisoners, feeding and clothing people, giving generously to the needs of others

Communal Practices: Seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination (for instance Wesley challenged Methodists to end slavery), and addressing the needs of the poor.

According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, "In both the Old and New Testaments mercy is an action taken by the strong towards the weak, the rich towards the poor, the insiders towards the outsider, those who have towards those who have not." Mercy can also be given by those who are bottom to the people at the top, often given to those who oppress or victimize. A great example would be the hug that Brandt Jean, the brother of Botham Jean, gave to Amber Guyger, his brother's killer.

Connect Heads:

Define the word "mercy" in your own words.

What is grace?

Why should we show mercy to others?

Is there a particular insight that you would like to share from the sermon, from the scripture, or from the small group curriculum?

Connect Heart:

Share a time when someone showed you mercy. What did you learn about God? Yourself? Others?

Share a time when you showed mercy to others. What did you learn about God, yourself, and others.

Why is mercy sometimes difficult to give?

Who do you most identify with in the scripture: James? The judgmental people? The rich man? The person judged? Why?

Connect Hands:

Write down some works of mercy that you would like to get involved in. Share what you have written down with the group.

Discuss how the group could get involved in works of mercy together.

Did you cause harm in word or deed to someone this week? (self-examination). If so, confess your sin to God, then seek to reconcile with your brother or sister.

Share your prayer concerns and celebrations.

Ask a member of the group to pray for the concerns and give thanks for the celebrations.

Notes Sections

Prayer Concerns:

Celebrations:

Daily Reflection Questions

Where have I seen God at work in my life today?

What is one thing that I am thankful for?

What is one thing that broke my heart today?

What is one good thing did I do for someone else today?