



**Christian Love-Part 5**  
**Loving God's Undeserved Mercy**  
**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well there are, of course, many, many things that people find hard to understand. Things like the trinity, that's admittedly hard to understand. The hypostatic union of Christ, that can keep you up thinking through how that all works. The difference between infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism, that can be hard. How cold fusion is possible. Why there's no "E" in the grading system. Why the little candy bars are called the "fun size" and the big ones aren't. It's no fun when they're smaller.

And it may be that some of your non-Christian friends, they look at you and they find it hard to understand why you would be a Christian. At least the kind of Christian that you are, you know, you're all into it and stuff and you can't do things on Sunday morning because your at church and you've got to do all these things that the Bible says and you take it so seriously and you seem kind of over-the-top about it all. Why do you have to be that kind of Christian? What's that all about? They don't understand it. Like most things that are hard to understand when you don't make sense of something it's usually because you're missing a vital piece of information. And so it is with our Christianity in light of people's opinions about it. They don't get it. What they don't get really comes down to one word. I mean in one respect you can see all of what makes the difference between an understandable Christianity and a Christianity that people scratch their head and say I don't know why you would be all into that, it's in a word. Mercy. Mercy. The word mercy.

Now, mercy is a word that you think, well that's not a big theological word. It doesn't seem like a word that would answer all these questions about why I'm a Christian. Well, it really does if you think about how mercy is presented to us in the Bible. Now there is basically four component parts of what mercy involves. It certainly involves a problem, right? It starts with a problem, there's some kind of trouble. And then, of course, there has to be that sense that you're over your head in that trouble, that you can't help yourself, there's something helpless about your plight.

And then, there's someone gracious, compassionate, condescending in their love who reaches out to rescue you from that trouble. So far so good. But the thing that holds it all together, if you really think about biblical mercy, it's this component part of it: that all of that is undeserved. It's undeserved. Trouble, over your head in that trouble, someone graciously scoops in to rescue you, that's an act of mercy. But it's really mercy only when you recognize that that help was undeserved.

Now of course your non-Christian friends get close to this concept of mercy when they fall into trouble that they seem over there over their head in. I mean there's all kinds of, you know, health problems, there's financial problems, there's legal problems, there's all kinds of issues that would lead some of your non-Christian friends to feel like, I can't find any human help. There's no way out of this and then they start sounding a lot like Christians.

Because they start calling out to God. And they say God, help! Have mercy on me. I need help.

And, you know what, depending on how they respond to that help or the lack thereof is really the difference between Christians and non-Christians.

Because it reveals that that gracious, compassionate, condescending help to pull someone out of trouble, how they respond to it really gives us a sense whether or not they believe that that help was undeserved or..., "Finally! We get this thing straighten out." You can tell because when someone



calls out to God, does not get the mercy they're crying out for, they end up being angry. That's one way to learn, they think, well, this should fix this. I'm in pain, other people aren't in pain, I have a problem that seems extraordinary, God help me. And if God doesn't help, they shake their fist at him.

Or if God does respond and he graciously delivers them, you can find that their response often times does give you a sense as to whether or not they felt that was deserved or not.

It's not that they're not grateful, it's just that their gratitude is just markedly different, categorically different. They have a sense in which, "Yeah, it's good that that's all behind us now. Let's get on with life." Well, we see all the component parts of this concept of mercy, our passage in Luke 17 that we've reached, verses 11 through 19, zeroes in on this one important concept of mercy.

And what we learn, we learn so much about what real Christianity is all about by the response to that act of mercy. It's an act of mercy that I think anyone in the plight of these people we're introduced to in this passage would want. They would want God to fix their problem. It's a terrible problem that we run into and it's the story of the ten lepers. So if you don't have your Bible open already please turn to this passage, Luke Chapter 17. We're going to read verses 11 through 19. We're going to begin with a whole 30,000 foot view of what's going on in this passage and then we'll go back through it and we'll just look at the component parts and see if we can't answer the question for your non-Christians who scratch their heads and say why would you be so into this thing called Christianity. Hopefully, even solve that mystery for them, at least you'll know how to articulate it to them. And maybe better yet, it will remind you this morning why you are a Christian in the first place.

Verse 11. "On the way to Jerusalem, he," that is Jesus of course, "was passing along between Samaria and Galilee." And I hate to be redundant, but if you're new to the Bible, you need to know Samaria. When you hear that word, you should hear in your mind "Dun, Dun, Dah." Samaria?

That was a group that was hated by the Jews.

Now the Jews lived in the northern area, in a region called Galilee around the Sea of Galilee and that was a Jewish enclave and all those villages were Jewish. And then down south in Jerusalem where they're headed, that's like the capital of, you know, of Jewish land, of Israel and so that's an area called Judea. But in between was this area called Samaria. And Samaria is known as the land, at least from the Jewish perspective, of the half-breeds. They're half breeds because in the eighth century B.C. when the Assyrians came in, as we read something about that in our Daily Bible Reading here recently as we went through the books of kings.

We saw that the Assyrians came and they conquered the northern ten tribes and when they did that you saw these ten tribes scattered, sometimes we call them the ten scattered tribes of Israel, and what happened is most of them inter-married with the Assyrians. Some were conscripted as slaves and taken away to Assyria but others were just kind of saying, well, when you're in Rome do as the Romans, and so you had these folks that used to be Jewish. At least the Jews saw them now as no longer Jewish, matter fact they're worse than gentiles, non-Jews, because they've given up their Jewishness by inter-marrying.

So any time you see Samaria, when we talk about the good Samaritan, "Dun Dun Dah." Good Samaritan, those are bad people. John 4, "Why are you talking to me, I'm a Samaritan" the woman at the well said. Well, as he's going along between Samaria and Galilee, he entered a village, verse 12, and he was met by ten lepers. Now, as long as he got free Wi-Fi here, you might want to look



up, if you have a strong stomach, you can go do an image search on leprosy. Now I know that sounds like an ancient disease but it's very modern, very current, it's all over the planet, there are various places that don't have good treatment for it. And so they suffer and it's actually such a degenerative disease of the skin, it's now called Hansen's disease. There are all kinds of medical missions, things that are being done in Indonesia, in Brazil, in South America, in India, where we're trying to deal with the problem of leprosy or Hansen's disease.

It's an awful disease because it's right there on the surface. It eats away at your skin.

The secondary causes of all the nubs on the hands of these people is because you have this multiple infection, repeated infection, no pain, no sensation in your skin. And some of them, at least the most severe characteristics of these people, basically don't have any fingers anymore, they have just stubs there.

It's a terrible infection that affects them, you couldn't look in their face without saying, oh, man, this person is being eaten alive by Hansen's disease, by leprosy. Of course the Bible talks a lot about these skin diseases in the book of Leviticus, how to diagnose them, how to quarantine them, how to put them in some sequestered place so that they're out alone by themselves because of the contagious nature of all this. We don't want them inner-mingling anymore with their families or their villages or their workplace, so they had these little leper colonies as they were known. There were ten lepers there, they stood at a distance, which they were supposed to do, by the way if you had leprosy, Hansen's disease, you were supposed to not get near the normal crowds, the healthy people and so from a distance they stood there and they lifted up their voices, verse 13, and they were saying, "Jesus, Master, have," here is our word, "mercy on us."

"You know we can't seem to help ourselves. We have no human solution to our problems. We're hurting. You know, if you would just be so kind. We heard you're the traveling Rabbi, maybe the Messiah of the Scriptures and it seems you've had powers to heal people. Could you have mercy on us?" When he saw them, verse 14, without any of the explanation we get elsewhere, we see him sometimes moved with compassion or he's described as, you know, having this concern in his heart. I assume that was all there. But all we get here is a simple command, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." Now in Leviticus 18, after all the descriptions of skin diseases, you had the Levites, who were the priests in these towns and villages, who were the most educated people in town. They were the doctors of the town. They were given all this training as they were growing up in the tribe of Levi and training to be priests to be able to diagnose these skin diseases and if someone no longer had them, and sometimes there was a reversal, they were to give them a certification to go and go back to their homes, back to the workplace, get back in your village, you're ok now. But they needed that clean bill of health from the Levites.

And so he said, "Go and show yourself to the priests." It's implied there that they're going to be clean, they're gonna be cleansed. And sure enough, verse 14, "As they went they were cleansed." And you can imagine how dramatic that must be.

Now I don't know the extent of these lepers but, I mean, rarely were you sequestered for any amount of time in the leper colony without having some very grave effects and you can imagine, let's just picture these people like you saw on the Google search there, of these people with these fingers that were rotting away. And all of a sudden you're going on this journey, wherever they were, we don't know exactly where but we've been guess geographically where they were, but sending them to Jerusalem to show themselves to the priests, then all of a sudden now you've got fingers growing back. You have this face that may be totally, you know, it's like it's decaying the flesh off this person's face and now it's restored. Forearms, hands, fingerprints. Verse 15, when "one



of them saw that he was healed, he turned back, praising God with a loud voice and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan." Dun, Dun, Dah. Right? Samaritan? Yeah, those are the ones that didn't like the Jews and the Jews hated the Samaritans. This was the unexpected one to come back to the Jewish Messiah. And yet there he was. And Jesus said, "Oh thank you so much, I just really loved the extra credit of your thanksgiving." No, no, no.

"Were not ten cleansed?" I mean, I knew what I was doing here when I healed the ten. I sent them on their way, they're going to heal on the pathway to Jerusalem and you're the only one that came back? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? And then something interesting. Verse 19. He said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

And that phrase certainly been absconded by the faith healers that we talked a little bit about last week. We've got to make sense of that. That should make you scratch your head a bit. We'll figure out why this is the crowning verse of this particular narrative. But let's start by this healing account in verses 11 through 14.

Let's make some observations about this text that may become great guides to our life as we think about the things that God has done for us because we've cried out for mercy and God has responded, perhaps not in the dramatic way we see here.

But I'll bet some of you have had a diagnosis that was medical. And I'll bet you had in your family someone that you love, perhaps yourself, has had a diagnosis like it must have rung in the ears of those people in the Bible times to hear that you have leprosy, you've been told, instead, that you have cancer.

Or you've got some other malady and you hear that and now, you think, man, I know this kills a lot of people. And you start praying to God. Instantly you feel over your head with this disease and you say God, "please."

And you do what you're told, you go through the process, radiation, chemotherapy, whatever, and some of you are sitting here right now listening to me and you're saying it's been years, and I have a clean bill of health, no cancer.

And, in that sense, I trust you recognize something of the feeling of these folks who'd been given, here's what I'll call it, a temporal expression of mercy. Why do I say that? Because any time God heals someone you need to recognize that healing is temporal. It doesn't last.

Let's just imagine that guy with the nubbed fingers that you looked up, let's say his fingers were completely restored and now, all of a sudden, he's got fingerprints like the rest of us, he has cuticles, he's got fingernails. I just wonder how long those newly created fingernails were. And there he is.

And within a matter of decades, where would those fingerprints be? How about those fingernails?

Well, they would be dust. The decaying flesh on these living beings would now be decaying flesh on dead human bodies because all of this was a temporal mercy. Huge! But temporal.

And if you start thinking about God's temporal mercies, you recognize it's not just in the big things like that. There's lots of ways you've cried out to God and say, "God I have a problem, I don't see myself getting through this without you intervening, please help me." And God steps in and does something and you sit here today saying, "Well I thought I was going to be living under the

underpass, but you know what? I had three squares yesterday. I'm going to have lunch today. I've got a roof over my head." And you say, "Well, I feared, I cried to God and God showed mercy." You sit here today knowing that that was an expression of God's mercy. Now it's temporal mercies but they are important ones to recognize. And that would be a good place for us to start, versus 11 through 14. Let us just observe from that, number one on your outline, that you and I, just like they, it was easy for them but let us spend some time identifying God's every day mercies. He does things for you because you called out to him and he's been merciful and responding. That is a good thing for you and I do identify.

Psalm 103:2. "Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all of his benefits." You shouldn't forget them. So let's take a minute here to be obedient to Psalm 103:2 and say, let us think about the mercies of God, the benefits of God.

Verse 3 says, he's "healed all of your diseases." Now you say, "I still got some diseases." Well, that's great, but right now you sit here listening to me and you are alive. And clearly, in Psalm 103, we recognize this, that even the Psalmist is now dead physically but at that particular point he says, "it ain't got me yet. Whatever illnesses and diseases I've had, I'm not dead yet so, so far I am the victor. I'm alive and my diseases haven't killed me yet."

So you're here because of God's mercy and you recognize some of those are very obvious.

And it's good for us to be people who forget not all of his benefits. Remember them, think about them, identify them, recognize that God is behind them, he's the giver of all good things. OK. We can teach that down the hall to our youngest CBC'ers and they'd get it. But here's what may be more of a challenge for big boy church. How about the things that aren't easy for us to recognize? Here's something that I assume you know, a verse from Lamentations Chapter 3. It speaks of God's mercies and it says those mercies, they're ever new, they never come to an end. They are new every morning. So I know this about the Bible. I don't have to wait for some disease and God to step in and get my body, nurse it back to health, to say look at the mercies of God because I don't get sick every day. But I know this about the Bible, there always are daily mercies given to me. And here's one category of mercies that are hard to identify. The mercies of God that are granted to me in things that did not happen to me. Now let's think that through. Those are harder to find but you got to think about them, because even if I just take that as literally as I can, at least two mercies a day, if I said, quickly write down fourteen mercies of God this week, you'd have to go from things that are obvious to things that are not so obvious and you have to stare at your week and say, now where are the mercies of God in this? It reminds me those 3-D, you know, images that are hidden in those splotches of color. As long as you got our Wi-Fi up, search for stereograms, do an image search for those. Remember when those came out there were all the rage at the mall, you'd see them in the books in the bookstore. Well, now, they're all free and you can get them on the Internet but if you did a Google image search on stereograms you'd have all these weird pictures. Do you remember those oldies? Twisted, this morass of colors and lines and squiggly lines.

And if you brought up that little tiled page of all those, if you just glanced through them or even open one and just click through them you'd say, like, weird, weird, weird, weird, weird.

But of course you know, depending on who you are, for me it takes a while, I got to stare and stare and stare, but if I stare long enough at that, get my focus to shift and adjust, look through it and look in front of it and, finally, WOW! Isn't that weird? Sharp focus. And there it is, a 3-D image. The 3-D images in the stereograms. And you think, wow, I'm never going to get that by skimming through images on my web browser. I have to stop, make it big and stare through it. And it's there. I mean, it's not magic, right? It's there. There's something, you just got to find it. And I want you to think





about things that could, potentially, be dangerous, harmful, injurious to your life, that God protected you from.

Here are some of the words of scripture when it speaks of God's mercy. Here's Psalm 40 verse 11, his mercies aren't restrained from me. Your love, your faithfulness, they preserve me.

Now, I'm talking to living people here, biologically alive. If you were here last week, you got here to this week, your life was preserved for one more week. And the Bible says that's an act of God's mercy.

I get notified on Friday night, one of my longtime friends was in a very serious car accident on I-5. Perhaps you were stuck in the traffic from his accident. He flipped his car northbound here on the I-5, his big truck. I get a picture sent to me from one of our other friends and here's his truck inverted on the freeway. Does your heart ever drop when you see stuff like that, particularly if you say, like, "Hey, here's our friend. Look at his truck. It's upside down on the freeway."

How's he doing? Is he OK? Is he alive? Smashed vehicle on the road. Yeah, he's at the ER right now getting checked out.

I get on the phone. Talk to his wife. How's it going up there? I was tied up in a meeting I couldn't get out of, but was talking to her. What's going on? Well, they think the biggest injury he has is this scrape on his arm from crawling out of the truck.

Whoa! And you know what I do in my heart. Thank God for his mercies. I could be planning a funeral for my friend right now. But he's alive. And then if I want to just contemplate that for a minute I start thinking about my wife and my daughter. How much time they spent on the freeway this week. I think about my sons. Hundreds of miles on Southern California freeways.

I think about me driving in a tin can, 70 miles an hour down the freeway, I think, that could be me and I might not have walked away from it. God, you sustain me, you preserve me, Psalm 139, "You hem me in, before and behind, your hand is upon me." Oh, you may be sitting here with some pains or aches or diseases or whatever but you made it another week. The Bible says you need to see that that's the preservation, the mercies of God, the everyday mercies of God. Some of the mercies that are hard to see are the mercies of things that did not happen to you. How's your breathing going by the way? "Well, I do have some respiratory problems. I have asthma." Do you know you took over 23,000 breaths yesterday? 23,000.

"Yeah, well, I do that every day." Well let me put your head under the water line in the pool and see how important every single one of those breaths is. Acts 17, "He gives us life and breath and everything else." I wanted all 23,000 of those yesterday. I could maybe skip one or two, but don't make me skip very many.

And if I don't have the ability to breathe in and breathe out and oxygenate my blood, I'm going to die in a matter of minutes, right?

It's not going to take very long. Are you still breathing? How's that heart doing? I read another article, it's horrible, about a horrible accident, that I don't even want to explain the details of it. I'm just so glad as I read that that my heart is in my chest and it is still beating. God preserves my life. He hems me in. Before and behind his hand is upon me. Psalm 139. Those are his mercies. He preserves me. Psalm 32:7, "You're my hiding place; you preserve me from trouble."



Now it's one thing to see, and I should quote more of Psalm 103. Psalm 103, the next verse says, "You've redeemed my life from the pit." In other words, you've extracted me from the pit. Now when you have a disease, Hansen's disease, cancer, even if you have the flu, when you look back on that and you say, God got me out of that. That's the mercy of God. But how about the pits you didn't fall into? How about the germs that didn't take you down? How about the diagnoses that did not come your way this year? Those are things the Bible says, he's kept you from trouble. "Well I've had my share of trouble." You could have had a lot more. You understand that.

And God I wish your good to not have you have more trouble than you had. And I know we don't see those very easily. We got to stare into our lives to get it.

You give stereograms to three year-olds, they are going to struggle with it. You ask a three year-old, tell me about the mercies of your mom and dad. How has your mom and dad expressed mercy to you? A three year olds goes "I don't know." The world revolves around him, he doesn't think about anything else. Parents of three year-olds, you know this, right?

They don't understand. They think food magically appears in your cupboards.

They think they're going to sit there and they're going to get that stuff all put in front of them. They don't think about how it got there, they don't think about how you earn money, don't think about insurance, they don't think about the car, they don't think about gas in the car, they think of nothing of your provision.

Ask a seven year-old. They may start to get some things now. "Yeah, I guess my parents, they give me a lot of cool things, I got a lot of cool presents for my birthday last year." Ask a 13 year-old. "Yeah, I start to see it, more and more. I mean, they're not cool and I don't like them, but they give me some things, I realize that.

Asked a 25 year-old. They start to get really insightful about the bills we pay for them when they were younger. "Yeah, my parents were merciful. Things I didn't deserve they gave me. Things that could have made me do but they didn't. Bills they could have handed to me but they paid for me.

Ask a 50 year-old who's been through parenting his own children how merciful his parents were to him. Even with imperfect parents who sit back and you recognize, "Yeah, I never thought about the sacrifices my parents made for me and what they did." It's amazing how your maturity starts to give you a sense of the mercies provided for you. And if you're a three day-old Christian, I get it, you may not understand a lot of it.

But, if you've been a Christian very long, 13 year-old Christian, 30 year-old Christian, you have no excuse. The more you've grown in Christ the longer your list of mercies should be. If I say his mercies are new every morning, I ought to see the heads shaking of every Christian who has been a Christian for any significant amount of time.

And if you're an elderly Christian who's walked with God for many years, man, you ought to be standing up going, "Ah, man, his mercies are new every morning.

Obvious mercies. We all have those. Those are the highlights of our testimony of the good things God has done throughout our lives. But the not so obvious ones are those mercies of things that did not happen, those are harder to identify. How about these? They're probably the most difficult ones of all and they come from the context of the passage I just quoted for you in Lamentations Chapter 3. Lamentations Chapter 3, in the middle of that chapter, Jeremiah writes these words, "His mercies



never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Now that is a statement from a prophet. He's known, by the way, Jeremiah, as the laughing prophet. You know that right? No? The happy, happy prophet. No? The joyful prophet. What's he called? The weeping prophet. What's wrong with him? He needs a therapist. He needs a walk in the park. He is working too hard. No, he's a man's man, there's nothing wrong with Jeremiah's disposition. It's that he's going through some horrific times.

Matter of fact, he's writing in a book called "Happy-tations." No, Lamentations. You don't have to be a linguist to figure that out.

That's not a happy song. That's a sad, grievous, burdened poem.

You mean he's seeing God's mercies in the middle of all that? Those are the hardest mercies to see.

You were diagnosed with cancer and it's not getting better. The loved one who you care for did die, passed away.

The trouble you're facing at work isn't getting better, it's getting worse.

You've lost your job, your house is getting repossessed, you're going through divorce, you have a legal problem. I don't know what it is. In the midst of all that the very mature Jeremiah says, "His mercies are new every morning; great is his faithfulness." You need to learn to identify the mercies of God even when things are going wrong. Could Job do that? Well, he couldn't the first and second chapter. Even when he had to bury his children, he could say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

There's someone who recognizes something more transcendent than just having a temporal problem figured out in his life. He could look at the overarching trajectory of his life and say, God is involved in this, God's mercies are present, he is faithful, his mercies are new every morning. Therefore, I will say, "The Lord is my portion," he says, "I will hope in him." Because of his great mercies. We are not consumed. See, it could be a whole lot worse.

And Jeremiah sat there and watched the temple that he worshiped in get reduced to rubble. He watched these Babylonian pagan idolaters come into his city and ransack it and steal all the wealth. He had cousins, I'm sure, he had sisters raped and towns and homes pillaged and people hauled off as prisoners to Babylon.

And he could say, because of your great love, we're not consumed, because of your mercies. There they are, "they're new every morning," I see them. I'll say, "the Lord is my portion." "Great is your faithfulness." "I'll put my hope in you." You've got to find those and sometimes you have to stare at them like a crazy, confused, chaotic series of events until you see the mercies of God in the middle of all that. How has God been merciful in your difficult time?

They're there, you have to look for them. And once you find them, I would recommend that you write them down. As a matter of fact, I would say it's critical that you do because Psalm 103:2 says, "forget not all of his benefits."

Do you remember those?

If I said to you what day of the week it is, what would you say? What day of the week is it? Are you sure? Pretty sure. Yeah.



No one looked at their watch to figure that one out.

If I said what hour are we in, I hope you would be able to do that. Probably that will... Oh, but you might need to look because we're near the top of the hour. If I said, what minute is it then you'd have to probably look at your phone and figure that one out. Now, if I said what second is it? There's no one, even my wife can't guess that, right? She's good at the minutes but she can't guess that.

See, if you're going to get down to the minutiae of what God asks us to do, forgetting not all of his benefits, remember them all, you're going to have to try and keep track. You need a timekeeper piece, if you will, that keeps track of the mercies of God so that you can say, look at them all, I've itemized them all. Just like Israel was told, pile up those rocks, call this to remembrance, make this memorial, name this place that, don't forget my mercies to you.

Identify God's everyday mercy. Now these are obvious ones, verses 11 through 14 in Luke 17. Clearly, they had something that was an act of God's mercy. They asked for it and they got it. But it affected one of them different than the nine, verse 15.

"Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice." Now, that's an interesting parody, by the way, you see that there, the symmetry of this passage, verse 13 said he was with a loud voice, he was lifting up his voice saying, with the other nine, "Master have mercy on us." So, loud cries of mercy and now, loud cries of what?

Well verse 16. It's worship and thanksgiving. He fell on his face at Jesus' feet giving him thanks. And it wasn't from the guy you expected. He was a Samaritan. And Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed?"

I thought I healed ten. "Where are the nine?" Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? I mean these are the guys known for not doing what they're supposed to do, at least in the eyes of most of the Jews. He's the one doing what he should do. He's clearly commended for this and he was expected to do what God here praises him for.

Giving thanks. Now if you read that, you will go, "of course." Really, of course? What was he told to do in verse 14? Go show yourself to the priests. What did he do? Went back to Jesus.

He turned around and went back. How far were they? I don't know. Far enough to where he says in verse 17, where are the other nine, he couldn't see them. So they're down the road far enough going to show the priests. Now, while they're going he had a decision to make. Do I keep doing what I was told to do, which is what? Leviticus 18, show myself to the priests so I get a clean bill of health, so I can go back to my job, back to my family, sit and finally have a meal with the people I love and not in this leper colony.

Or do I turn around and go to the source of the one who did this for me and fall on my knees, groveling like a servant, before a master, that is after all what I called him, and give thanks?

He decided to make thanksgiving the priority.

Number two on your outline, that would be a good thing for us to jot down. We need to make thanksgiving the top priority for us. And I'm telling you, it wasn't an easy decision.

Oh, it was, I suppose, because he's overwhelmed with gratitude. It was, I suppose, to the thing we're



about to see in verse number 19. But on the surface to look at that and say, you're telling me this was more important to you than finally getting that pink slip back on your life, to get that go ahead to return to normal? You're telling me that it's more important for you to go to a worship service than that?

Yes. I recognize priorities in my life and the top priority is me being grateful in drawing the line between my gifts of mercy and the one who gave them to me. That is the priority.

Make thanksgiving your top priority.

Now if you're feeling a little bit like you felt last week when we were studying that passage about Jesus being the master and us being the slaves and the servants, again you might go, there he is, he's just an egomaniac, wants all the thanks, I mean, demanding it, priority. You realize that Christ wants us to be thankful for the mercies that we get from him not because he's mean but because it's right.

If I come and you're picking up one of your young kids down the hallway here in the next building over and I come and I give a gift to your child and you're standing there and you watch me, I get down on one knee and I give a gift that your kid really enjoys and he takes that and a smile comes across his face.

I assume that you, as a good parent, are going to teach your kid to say thank you. You know why you're going to do that? Because you're mean. No. I'm going to do that because it's just appropriate. Pastor Mike didn't have to think of buying this present for my kid, Pastor Mike didn't have to go out spend his money on my kid, Pastor Mike didn't have to find his way over here and get on one knee and give my kid a present. But he did. Wow, that's really nice. "Hey son, can you thank Pastor Mike for that?" You'd do that not because you're mean. You'd do that because it's right. You'd do that, I hope, because you would see my gift to your child as an expression of my concern, my love, my mercy, my kindness, my generosity to your child, and you'd want some reciprocation of that. And so your thanksgiving, that you're trying to provoke in your child would be the reciprocation of my loving gesture. So, thanksgiving then is, in some ways, a very simple reciprocation of love.

If God lovingly pulls your life out of a pit or steers your path around a pit and you didn't die on the I-5 this week or you didn't have some disease this week or you've had some kind of deliverance from some problem or he spared you from all kinds of trouble, that's an act of merciful, condescending love and your response to that can simply be, thank you.

Now how should we do that? I suppose if I got down on one knee and I gave that gift to your child and your kid did not even pick his eyeballs up to look at me but sat there and just did this (mumbling) thank you, as kids are known to do. I hope you'd kick him in the butt and say, "Look Pastor Mike in the eye and tell him thank you."

I hope you wouldn't be satisfied and you'd have a little talk on the way home about heartfelt thank yous. You would want gratitude to come somewhere from his heart. Take a minute, pause and think about it and would you please express your gratitude to Pastor Mike. As you raise your kids don't you teach them manners? Because it's the right thing to do, it's the proper thing to do, it's the good thing to do.

I mean, your kids grow up, they go to a dinner party, you bring the hostess a present. That's just what you do. You have a birthday party, you get presents, of course, you're going to have them jot those things down and you're going to make sure that they send handwritten thank you notes out.



You're going to teach your kids to... That's the right thing to do. People express love to you, you respond, you'd be thankful.

Psalm 9 verse 1, I love this verse when it comes to this topic. The Psalmist says, "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all your wondrous deeds." Those things go together. I'm going to be very specific in my thanksgiving and I'm going to make sure my heart is involved. And then this, here's the disposition, verse 2. "I will be glad and," here's a word you didn't use this week, "I will exult, not exalt, but exult. You know that word? I will exult. What does it mean? I will purpose to, in my disposition, show some kind of elation, some kind of joy, some kind of jubilation. I will purposely say to myself I am going to be happy, and cheerful about being thankful. "I will exult in the Lord; I will sing praise to your name."

I know you think it's sometimes backwards, that singing a song is worship. Now that's just like one of the last vehicles of expression for it. It's not mouthing words. I hope Christ did not look at your worship this morning the way I would look at your kid who didn't lift up his eyes from the gift and kind of out of the corner of his mouth just parroted the words back, that he's supposed to parrot in the hallway because he got a present.

See, it starts with this: "With my whole heart I will give thanks to the Lord. I will do it for all his wondrous deeds. I will be glad; I will exalt." I will purposefully, as Psalm 103 verse 1 says, I will "bless the Lord, O my soul," I'll tell my soul that "and all that is within me," my whole heart. I will tell myself "bless his holy name!"

Worship is not what you think it is. It is not having an "emotional experience in heaven. Green fuzzies in your heart. I gotta get there." It's about you learning to be sincerely thankful. "Well, if something big happens, I guess I'll try to..."

His mercies are new every morning. You made it another week. I hope you don't get to your bed and put your butt on your bed and put your feet under your covers and not think, "God, you got me through another day. Blessed be the name of the Lord. You provide for me, you give to me, I took another 23,000 breaths today. I'm still kicking, I'm still alive, I didn't die, I wasn't attacked."

And even if you were attacked, even if the cancer doesn't recede, even if you lose your job. Like Job, like a Asaph, like so many others in the Bible, let's turn and be able to say, you know what, I can find his mercy in the midst of the pain, I can see that because of his great love and mercy for us, we're not consumed.

I say this often from this platform but the difference between you and your non-Christian counterpart, in terms of your practice, isn't the fact that they don't get mercy and you get mercy. It's not that God is merciful to you and is not merciful to them.

He gives life and breath and everything else to you, but the sentence starts this way in Acts 17, "He gives to all mankind life and breath and everything else." Matter of fact, sometimes you get a little torqued about that because you look your neighbor and it seems like he's getting more of everything than you are from God. Well, the difference isn't that you get from God and he doesn't.

It isn't that he doesn't, as he says in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, have HIS sun rise on the evil and the good, send HIS rains on the crops of the just and the unjust. No, the difference is you're supposed to respond with thanksgiving because you see him as the giver of all good things. The difference between you and non-Christians is that you worship God, you praise God, you thank God. And you don't wait until a song comes on the radio or until you walk into a church service to

do that. You ought to be doing that as regularly and consistently as you take breaths every day. God is the giver of all good things. Make thanksgiving the top priority. It is more important than all the urgent things that are seeking your attention. You do understand the urgent things always give us some kind of immediate gratification. Thanksgiving does not give us the immediate gratification, at least not at first as we're training ourselves to do it because it is about a relationship with God whereas all the urgent things keeping us from that gives us some kind of immediate feedback. We need to recognize that sometimes when the urgent displaces the important because we don't see that the important things have long-term benefits and the urgent things have short term benefits. You got to get back to thanksgiving, it is so critically important that Jesus expected it. It was the duty of the servant. As we ended our study last week in verse number 10, it's the duty of a servant who recognizes this one very important thing and I think it's the reason this whole story is here in verse 10, it says we are unworthy servants.

Now we get to verse 19. That is what this verse is all about.

Verse 19, Luke 17. "And he said to him," Jesus says to the one leper out of ten, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well." Now, again, I say this is absconded.

This is ripped out of this passage and it's given as the key to all the televangelists and all the faith healers, all the word faith people, all people who are promising that you can get well if you just have enough faith because faith makes you well. That's the operative word that unleashes the power of God. You just need to believe enough and then you won't have any problems that you have.

Nah, that can't possibly be what this verse means. I'm not arguing from experience, I'm arguing from this passage and here's why.

If you look at this passage, you've got ten lepers that are healed. You have this statement made to one of the guys. Let's think about this. If this is a statement about how all ten of those guys got healed, here's how it would read, "Rise and go your way. Y'all's faith has made y'all well." That's how it would read.

And I know you don't need a country Bible for that distinction because the Greek language is very specific with that and all the pronouns are either singular or plural and the pronouns here are all singular.

"Your" faith, singular, has made "you," singular, well. Your faith has made "you" well.

Now, if this isn't about how they were all healed then it must be about how he was healed. Well that's how he was healed, then how were the other guys healed? Because they were healed, as a matter of fact, look what it says in verse number 14, "As they went," bottom of verse 14, "they were cleansed," not he was cleansed, "they were cleansed." Verse 15. When one of them saw that he was healed, we see that if they're all cleansed then the synonym here is that they were healed so they were all healed, and in verse 17 he makes it clear, hey, you're the only one who has..., not because you were the only one healed, weren't there 10 that were cleansed? So we can't possibly say, well, I guess this guy must have been healed by the mechanism of faith and the other ones get healed without it because then all the faith healers and all their rhetoric goes out the window because, then I guess God just heals whenever he wants to heal.

Which, by the way, is how it works.

So what are we talking about here? Oh, I'm so glad you asked. Let's clarify this.

I said the key to this is the difference between biblical mercy and worldly mercy, the difference between real Christians and non-Christians, it's the difference between servants who see themselves as unworthy and servants who don't.

Let me go back to give you this, as we set it up, verse 14. "When he saw them he said to them, 'go show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went they were cleansed." Underline that word, cleansed, then go to 17, highlight and underline the word "were there not ten cleansed?"

"Katharizo." The New Testament was written in the language of Greek, **Koine Greek**, the word "katharizo," a very common word, it deals with healing. It's a good connection to leprosy because leprosy was known as a primarily unclean condition. Sometimes this is translated clean or unclean depending on how it has the negation at the front of it. And here in this particular text, clearly cleanse means that they are no longer having all this filthy disease on them, they were going to show themselves to the priests so they could be given a clean bill of health. Katharizo, it's the word we would expect. It talks of their healing.

Verse number 15. "Then one of them, when he saw that he was," here's a different Greek word that is translated for us as healed, "iaomai" is the Greek word. Iaomai is the word that we see in the New Testament that describes someone who was sick and now he's not. I mean, it may happen slowly, you could break your arm, you say, oh, you got a problem, you have a fracture, you got an injury, but in time, a few months later, we look at your arm and it's iaomai, it's healed. It's fixed. So we know that katharizo is dealing with a skin disease. Iaomai is dealing with a skin disease. And so in verse 19, I just wonder what we're dealing with in this passage. And those of you with your tablets and laptops and your Bible software, you're ahead of me on this aren't you? Verse 19. "And he said to him, 'Rise and go your way; your faith has made you,'" is it katharizo? Is it iaomai?

Ah, no, it's a brand new word, "sozo." Sozo? Sozo? What is that? We get the English word, which doesn't sound like English to a lot of you, soteriology from this word. Soteriology, Sunday school grads, is the study of salvation.

The word is translated throughout the New Testament, sozo is translated most of the time, over a hundred times in New Testament, salvation. You are saved. Now can it be used for saved from a pit, saved from a financial problem, saved from a medical problem? Sure, it can be used that way but it's metaphorical when it comes to how it's usually used. It's a metaphorical word describing being saved from the penalty of my sins. Sozo.

Hey, you've been katharizo'd. You've been iaomai'd.

You've been fixed of your ailment. Now we get to the bottom, he says rise, go your way, you individual, because you, individual, your faith has made you, individual, sozo'd. Saved.

Now it's translated well. That's the word and the context has to distinguish in some way the "wellness" of what this guy has and what the others don't have. Now let's try and think that through.

He comes back, falls on his face as an illustration of verse number 10, the unworthy slave.

He comes and recognizes, you know what, I'm not just high five-ing the people at the temple in Jerusalem saying. "Hey, I'm all fixed here." "Who did that?" "Jesus did, I sent him a thank you note." No, it's not that, I'm going back, I'm falling at his feet and I'm recognizing this about mercy, the fourth component, that is Biblical mercy, I don't deserve it. And that undeserving sense of



unworthiness that you've given me grace when I don't deserve it. You've been merciful to me. He says, now you've come to me, you're trusting me. That kind of trust is the difference between real Christianity and foxhole Christianity. That's the kind of faith that saves. Your faith has made you well. And you need to understand this: temporal mercies, those are good things but they're intended for one thing. The Bible's super-clear on this but let's write it down first, it's for us to reach out and take hold of God's greatest mercy.

Number three, you need to seek God's greatest mercy and the greatest mercy is not you having your disease fixed, the greatest mercies is not you getting a better job, the greatest mercy is not you keeping your family intact, the greatest mercy is not you having the things that you want in your garage or in your bank account. The greatest mercy is that you have a problem with sin, you are unworthy before a Holy God, and here's the greatest mercy of all, Christ would come and give his life as a ransom for many. Which, by the way, is the whole point of why he said he came. "I didn't come to call the righteous." Although the Bible was really clear there are no righteous people, no, not one.

"I came to call the sinner to repentance." Now are you willing to admit you're a sinner? Oh, then you're now seeing yourself as an unworthy recipient of mercy. "Sinners to repentance." Repentance assumes that I've got something to repent of. Jot this one down, if you don't know it by heart, Romans Chapter 2 verse 4. He said, don't you recognize that his "kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?"

Why is it that you didn't fall into a pit this week? Why is it that you didn't get into a crash on I-5? Why is it that you're not in the hospital? Why is it that you're not dead this week? Because all of his mercies are to get you to the ultimate mercy. And that is that you will trust him for repentance. You will say, "God, I want to repent of my sins, I want to trust you for what you've done for me." That's the ultimate mercy. That's a sozo mercy, that's a kind of wellness mercy, that's the forgiveness of our sins, that's the cancellation of our debt. That's what Christianity is all about.

If you don't think that's on Jesus' mind all the time then maybe you need to review, at some point, Luke Chapter 5 when he runs into the paralytic. Do you remember that story? Here's another healing but it didn't start out that way. The paralytic was brought and his friends brought him because his friends wanted to see him able to walk. My daughter, you know, paralyzed from the knees down, most of you know that, it would be great for her to walk. It would be good for me to take her to Jesus and say, "hey, Jesus, fix her legs." That would be awesome. But when the friends brought this man, apparently his faith was of a sozo variety because Jesus looks at him and he says, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Now wait a minute, they came to bring this guy to get healed and he says ultimate healing, ultimate mercy, I'm going to grant you expiation of your sins, forgiveness of your sins. And they sat around and murmured, "Who's this man, forgiving sins? No one can do that but God." Well, you're right about that.

And he says I hear all your grumbling. Then he asked the rhetorical question, you might remember this, you can go back and listen to it, we studied this passage, he says, "Which is harder to do? To say your sins are forgiven or to take up your mat and walk? Rise and walk."

"Well, hmmm... I guess it would be easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' because there's no way to prove that that's reality. But if you're really saying your sins are forgiven that would be impossible unless you're God. I guess that would be harder even though it's super-duper hard to have somebody who's paralyzed to walk. I mean, ahh.. I think saying your sins are forgiven." He said, "Just so that you can see that the Son of Man," which is the title of divinity from Daniel 7, "has the authority on earth to forgive sins," I'm going to tell this guy right now, fine, you came with sozo faith, now I'm



going to give you katharizo mercy, iaomai mercy. Now I'm going to say this, "Take up your mat and walk."

And he gets up and walks.

Even that was to tell those people in the room, I'm going to give mercy to someone that you care about so that you can recognize the ultimate mercy is for you to get your sins forgiven. Seek God's greatest mercy. That's what this is all about. Ultimately it doesn't matter if your cancer is eradicated, in the long run it really won't matter whether or not you have a great job. What really will matter is whether or not your soul will ever hear from Christ, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

You got to think long term. If you got thrown in jail tonight, maybe at the booking desk you somehow run your hand along the counter and you get a big splinter into your thumb.

And I show up. They say, "Hey you, your pastor is here."

I walk in and I say, "Hey, I know your thumb is bothering you. I got some tweezers for you. I pull out some really nice, like medical grade tweezers, I reach into my other pocket and get out antibiotic cream. Be sure and put a little of this on it. In my back pocket, I got a Band-Aid, put that on.

I'll bet if you were struggling with that and it gave you pain every time we touch something in the cell you were in, Ahh! I'll bet you'd be grateful. You might even, if you were so fixated on that splinter, you might be saying, "Man, I just wish I had some tweezers."

But Pastor Mike is here. You have a visitor. Hey, tweezers antibiotic cream, Band-Aid. Now that would be great and since no one called me, I just showed up and out of the kindness of my heart, I stopped at CVS and I bought all those things and I came in and gave them to you. Now that would be a great act of mercy, wouldn't it?

And you needed it. But it's not your biggest need though, is it?

You'd rather I show up with a backpack full of money to bail you out. Maybe a good lawyer next to me in a nice \$3,000 suit. "Here's your lawyer. Here's your bail money." Now, I'd get a bigger hug, I think. Thank you, Pastor Mike for the greatest mercy.

You may be like Jeremiah saying, while I prayed that God would give me relief, he hasn't. I prayed this bad thing wouldn't happen and it did. I hoping you can get good at looking at the stereogram of your messy life and say, hey, I'm seeing God's mercy in the midst of all this. Because of his great love, because of his mercy we're not consumed. His mercies are ever new, they don't end, they're new every morning.

Great is your faithfulness. If you think this is just an evangelistic sermon, "You know, I'm already a Christian." Great. Christian, get to work at recognizing those daily mercies, that was the first, you know, two points of our sermon. And then realize this is more than just a verbal expression, even a heartfelt verbal expression. It's more than that. After eleven chapters of the Apostle Paul talking about the mercy of God, he crescendos into this statement in Romans Chapter 12 verse 1. He says, "Therefore, brothers, knowing the mercies of God, present yourself to him as a living sacrifice.

So much in this chapter we talked about going the extra mile, spending the extra dollars, staying the extra hour, it's like Isaiah in that image having his lips cleaned from his sin. And then, God saying, I



have stuff to do here in this world. And like a third grader who can't sit in his seat when the teacher asked the question, he's so excited, "Here I am. Send me.

When the demoniac was healed, sitting in his right mind at the feet of Christ and Christ was about to leave with his apostles, he says, "I want to go with you." You want to talk about this if you're already Christian, great, then I got a job for you. He said, "No, you're not going to come with me. I want to go back to your hometown, I want you go to the village, I want you to go to your friends, I want you to tell everyone about God's mercy on you. Tell everyone about it.

You've got a job to do. If you've embraced his greatest mercy, that's great, so have I. Time for us to be thankful for his everyday mercies and it's time for us to celebrate and tell everyone about his greatest mercy.

That passage in Psalm 40 about God's mercy not being restrained and him preserving our life is prefaced with these two verses, "I have told of the glad news of your deliverance in the great congregation; I have not restrained my lips." "I have not hidden your deliverance in my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness in the great congregation." I am telling people. I know you're embarrassed at work because you're a Christian and people don't understand. You've got an ancient book you follow, you've got all these outdated morals that you follow.

Speak up. They won't understand, some of them won't. Talk to them about mercy. That's the difference. That's what they don't know. That's the piece of information they don't understand. Displayed for us in these nine verses this morning and I hope that's helpful to you. Not just as an apologetic, but a reminder as to why you're a Christian to start with.

Let's pray. God, help us all to understand your great faithfulness. Because even if everything in this world were to fall apart and one day it will, we're supposed to remember that the ultimate concern that we should all have is the state of our soul, where we are with you. And one day, our faith will be sight as you bring in the kingdom but at that point there'll be no option for us.

We will not have any second chances. It will be at that point either we'll hear "enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" or we will hear "depart from me, I never knew you." So God let us grab that greatest mercy because every single bit of relief, every breath we've taken, is a reminder of your kindness that is to lead us to repentance that opens the door and secures for us eternity. And as secured, God, I pray that we would be those like that demoniac, that former demoniac, who is now told to go and spread the news of the mercy of God everywhere. Which isn't about, "Yeah, I got what I deserved" it's about we're unworthy servants. Thank you so much for being faithful to me. In Jesus name, Amen.