

Mercy Sermon Series – Introduction

The mercy of God is a well-known theme in the Bible, and we can see God's mercy at work in the Exodus and the Cross. But what exactly *is* mercy? Is it an action or an emotion? Or is it more like a character trait? And more importantly, what does mercy look like in the life of everyday Christians? In this set of devotions we will try to tease out the nature of both God's mercy and ours, and seek some inspiration and motivation for practising mercy. We will also try to distinguish mercy from other biblical virtues like grace, justice and love, and from other ideas of mercy which we might encounter outside the Bible. You can also find these devotions and other resources for the series online at <http://stjamescroydon.org/sermons>.

Day	Passage	Starter Questions	Going Deeper	Prayer
1	Ex 3:1-8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does God say has moved him to rescue his people? What picture of God does this give you? 2. What will be the end result of his rescue effort? 3. Why do you think Moses is afraid to look at God? 	God is not ruled by his emotions, but he is presented as having an emotional connection to his people. Is your understanding of God that he is <i>personal</i> like this?	Praise and thank God for his personal concern for you.
2	Ex 33:12-19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God has mercifully rescued his people from Egypt, but what is Moses concerned about now, in going to the promised land? 2. Moses asks God to show him his glory – what are the things about God that are 'glorious'? 3. God 'proclaims' his glory instead of just 'showing' it – what does this say about the nature of God's glory? 	God says, "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Why is it important that God's mercy be his own choice? Read Romans 9:14-24 for Paul's explanation.	Jesus is the one who ultimately reveals and glorifies God (John 17:1). Ask God to continue to show you his glory in Christ.
3	Deut 4:20-31	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does Moses warn the people against when they reach the promised land? 2. What reason is there for hope, even if they do stray from God and come under his judgement (v. 31)? 3. What does this say about how God exercises mercy? Is this the same as his mercy in the Exodus? 	God does not forget his covenant, even when his people forget it (v. 23, 31). How do you think faithfulness fits into the idea of mercy?	Do you find it hard to have compassion towards someone who has broken your trust? Pray for God's help in showing mercy even to the unfaithful.
4	Dan 9:8-19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This is Daniel's prayer after God's people have been exiled from the promised land. What does he say they have done to deserve this? 2. What is Daniel's basis for asking God's forgiveness (v. 8, 18)? 3. Why do you think Daniel refers back to Moses and the Exodus? 	Do you ever ask God for forgiveness, either in general, or for specific sins? On what basis do you expect him to grant your request?	Using Daniel's prayer as an outline, ask God for forgiveness on the basis of his merciful character, demonstrated both in the Exodus and at the Cross. You might like to write out your prayer before praying it.
5	Luke 1:68-79	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These are the words of Zechariah at the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner to Jesus Christ. What does he say God is about to do for his people? 2. What kinds of imagery does he use to picture the plight of God's people and the coming of Jesus (v. 78-79)? 3. How does this imagery help our appreciation of God's mercy? 	Zechariah sees Jesus as the ultimate fulfilment of God's promises in the Old Testament. How is Jesus a greater revelation of God's mercy than Moses and the Exodus?	As you did for Daniel, use this prayer as an outline for a prayer of your own, praising God for the merciful salvation he has brought about through Jesus.
6	Mat 20:29-34	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What kind of mercy are the two men asking Jesus for? 2. Why do you think they appeal to Jesus as the 'Son of David'? (hint: read v. 69 in yesterday's passage). 3. What emotional response does Jesus have to them? Why is this an important part of mercy? 	Mercy seems to have both practical and emotional dimensions. What examples can you think of where you have seen someone practically demonstrate their compassion?	Thank Jesus for his merciful character, demonstrated in his care for the sick and the marginalised. Ask for opportunities of your own to show mercy.
7	Titus 3:1-7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What situation does the passage say we were in when God showed us mercy? 2. What was God's motivation, and what wasn't God's motivation? 3. How does God's grace in salvation motivate and influence our own works of mercy (v. 1-2)? 	Actions like submission and obedience seem to come from situations where the other person is in a position of power over us. How could these kinds of actions still be considered 'merciful' on our part?	Praise God for each of the many things in this passage which he has given us out of his mercy: salvation, rebirth, renewal by the Spirit, Jesus Christ, justification, grace, inheritance, hope, eternal life.

Prayer for the Series: *Merciful father, let the good news of your mercy in Christ be clear to me in your word today. Help me to be a merciful as you are merciful, and protect me from being an unmerciful servant. Let your mercy be clear not just in your word, but in my life. In Jesus name, Amen.*