**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from August 15, 2021
David as Merciful**

Brothers and Sisters, we know from Scripture and from experience that our lives are not meant to be easy. There are challenges in this world and additional challenges in going against the stream of this world and following after Jesus.

But following Christ is more than worth it. And one of the ways that we see this is when God reveals Himself in exciting and surprising ways.

This week, I experienced another one of those moments of standing in awe of God for something specific about this week. His goodness is so amazing and remembering His goodness gives us strength through the difficulties.

This took place on my birthday a few days ago. And on that day, my daughter Leah wrote me a very meaningful note. A note from her heart and deeply spiritual and beautiful. The notes that our daughters write for me are all treasured deeply in my heart.

But she ends this birthday note with a Scripture. It was from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5, verse 7.

**“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”**

And this struck me so powerfully because this was one of the Scriptures that I was planning to focus on today, as we continue to take a closer look at some of the things we can learn from the life of David. To me, it was a confirmation that God has His gracious hands all over the details in my life. And I trust that He has His gracious hands all over the details of your lives as well.

So as we continue to learn from the incredible life of David, it is important to remember that as much as David was a warrior for God and as much as he cared about justice, David was also a man of mercy.

I have heard it said this way --- grace is getting something that we do not deserve and mercy is not getting something that we do deserve. Truly, all humanity deserves God’s judgment because of our sin, but God is rich in mercy and offers us forgiveness through Jesus as we trust in Him and in what He did for us in giving His life.

Truly, it was at the cross of Jesus Christ where God’s judgment and His mercy met.

Last week we heard the powerful story of David and Goliath. David had that Ferris wheel perspective. David knew that God was far bigger and more powerful than any person, including Goliath.

And again, we saw how David cared about justice. To be just is to hate what God hates and to seek to oppose it, as He directs us.

We are to hate all evil and sin in all of its many forms and to actively oppose injustice.

One way that I see us doing this here at Chestnut Grove is through our 2nd mile giving. Giving to help New Life for Girls and to fight human trafficking with Operation Underground Railroad and to sponsor children in need with Compassion International and to support New Hope, these are some of the ways that we as a church are seeking to bring God’s justice to our broken world.

But these ministries are also ministries of mercy and we are to be people who love mercy.

Micah 6:8 teaches us that “we are to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.”

Like David, we can choose to do all of the above.

Now while there are other examples of David being merciful in Scripture, today we are going to focus on how he showed mercy towards King Saul. David displayed great mercy when it came to his relationship with King Saul. Saul was the legitimate King that God had anointed to lead Israel.

But Saul unfortunately, was a disappointment. We are told that the Lord was grieved that He had made Saul King.

Now, I do not think that God made a mistake in making Saul king. I believe that Saul started well and he could have been a great king, but he blew it as he become proud of his status and became disobedient to God’s commands.

And so God saw David as a man after His heart and as a much better option to lead His people. But the challenge though was that although David was anointed to be the next king of Israel, Saul was still the king and he did not want to turn his kingdom over to David.

This would lead to David becoming a fugitive. Imagine that? The hero who defeated Goliath ends up speaking approximately 13 years living on the run from Saul. Wow! That’s a long time.

And we read how Saul pursued David and tried to kill him repeatedly. But twice, God delivered Saul into David’s hands and twice, David chose mercy. Let us think about that as we hear sections from those two fascinating stories.

The passages are found in 1 Samuel 24:4-12 & 1 Samuel 26:7-12

**4The men said, “This is the day the Lord spoke of when he said[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+24%3A4-12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7844a)**] to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’” Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.**

**5Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. 6He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord.” 7With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.**

**8Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. 9He said to Saul, “Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? 10This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord’s anointed.’ 11See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. 12May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you.**

This was the first example of David choosing to show mercy to Saul as he was pursuing him and seeking to take his life.

We read that after David cuts off a piece of Saul’s robe and becomes guilt-stricken for even doing that, it was the Spirit of God reminding David that while God cares about justice the Lord was calling David to leave vengeance into God’s hands. God has made Saul the King of Israel and David refused to raise his hand against him.

This tells us something about the character of this man David.

Then again, two chapters later, as Saul was again pursuing David, we read this:

**7So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.**

**8Abishai said to David, “Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won’t strike him twice.”**

**9But David said to Abishai, “Don’t destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless? 10As surely as the Lord lives,” he said, “the Lord himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. 11But the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let’s go.”**

**12So David took the spear and water jug near Saul’s head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the Lord had put them into a deep sleep.**

Again, David chooses to not take vengeance into his own hands. He chooses to show mercy and trust that God will deal with this situation. David would not lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed. David would choose to walk in mercy towards Saul, even though he has to live on the run from Saul.

Interestingly, sandwiched between these two stories, we find another story of David. And in this story, David was ready to not show mercy to a man named Nabal. Nabal was a wealthy, but greedy and foolish man. And Nabal refused to give David and his men food and water as they were being pursued by Saul.

But God, in His grace, worked through Nabal’s wife, Abigail, to soften David’s heart and he was restrained from acting in rashness and in taking vengeance.

So David spared Saul twice in chapters 24 & 26 and in chapter 25, David is spared from wrongfully shedding blood and taking vengeance in his own hands.

Perhaps this is a great example of the truth that Jesus would later teach, **“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”** God mercifully provided David a way of not succumbing to his rashness.

Clearly, these passages of Scripture reveal David to be a man after God’s own heart as he refused to strike down God’s anointed.

So what are we to make of this Scriptures when it comes to our own lives today?

**As we seek to be people after God’s own heart, we must be people who love mercy as well.** This doesn’t mean that we are to ignore justice, but it does mean that we are to remember that God wants us to love mercy.

He wants us to love forgiving people and to love not replying evil for evil.

James 1:19 teaches us that we are to be **“quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”**

One sign of spiritual maturity is self-control. It is human nature to lash back, to want to have the last word, to make sure that we won the argument. And this is especially true when someone is slandering us or evil seeking to harm us.

It is a supernatural thing to respond in love and kindness to those that are unloving and unkind to us and to others.

The next question is how do we do this? Please know that this message is not a works-focused message and I do not want you to get into striving.

So how are we to love and practice mercy?

**First, we are to tend to our walk with Jesus and seek to be yielded to the Holy Spirit in our daily walk**. As we tend to these things, the fruits of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, and the others – including self-control – will grow in our lives.

Now this doesn’t happen overnight. Just the other day our daughter Anna noticed that a pumpkin was growing in her garden, which she planted a while back. It didn’t grow overnight. It took time.

And it is like this with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. They gradually grow in our lives as we tend to our primary calling of walking daily and obediently to Jesus Christ.

And before we know it, we will love and practice mercy more and more naturally.

As the love of Christ grows within us, we will gradually become slower and slower to anger, who choose to not keep a record of sins – sins of others or of ourselves – but rather, choose to practice mercy.

**Second, a helpful way that we love and practice mercy is by praying for those that persecute us, praying for those that are opposing us in some way**. It is much easier to be merciful towards people whom we are praying for. Jesus teaches us to pray for those that persecute us. If there are people that are causing you problems, take time to pray for them and you will find mercy and self-control growing as you do this. Not only are your prayers powerful instruments that the Lord may use to help open people’s hearts and minds to the good news of Jesus, but as we pray for them, we are transformed ourselves to become more like Christ.

**And third and finally, we grow in becoming more merciful but regularly remembering and giving thanks for God’s amazing mercy given to us through Jesus**. As we remember God’s forgiveness and cleansing for our sins and healing of our soul, we are empowered to be dispensers of mercy as well – not just towards others, but also towards ourselves, for sometimes we are the hardest on ourselves. But if Christ has forgiven us, who are we to not forgive ourselves.

Let us pray and ask the Lord to help us be people who not only act justly, but also love and practice mercy.

**Sources:**

BibleHub.com

BibleGateway.com

Historical & Poetic Books – Notes from course – Dr. David A. Dorsey