

The Gathering Church

Sonia's message 6/28/26

Know God As He Is – Mercy - Wk1

God is Mercy

Desire His Presence
Mercy Restores Presence
Mercy Demands Response
Mercy Fulfills Justice
Faith Will Heal
Receive Mercy Daily
Practice Mercy Concretely

Psalm 136:1 Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, For His mercy is everlasting.

Opening Prayer: Lord God, open our hearts to the truth of who you are. Teach us to receive your mercy as the living reality it is, and to reflect it in our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Introduction —Mercy is a short word that holds an entire universe. From the church's ancient cry— "Lord, have mercy"—to the very last supplication of the cross, "Father, forgive them...," mercy is God's active compassion toward the broken.

A.W. Tozer called mercy "an attribute of God, an infinite and inexhaustible energy within the divine nature which disposes God to be actively compassionate."

Mercy is a foundational attribute of God, defined as his compassionate, steadfast love that acts to give relief to the suffering, withholding the punishment humanity's sins rightly deserved.

Mercy is God's hand of justice, stilled.

Today we will dwell on mercy as God's character, mercy as our restoration, and mercy as the ethic that shapes our life.

Mercy as God's attribute and action

When Tozer calls mercy an "inexhaustible energy," he means **mercy is not a mood** but a constant in God's being. The same God who walked with Adam in Eden is the God who pleads on the cross, "Father, forgive them." **Mercy is present in covenant history**: God's patience with Israel, his warnings through the prophets, and his restorative promises all display a God who consistently moves toward sinners.

Mercy is not capricious; it's faithful. From His covenant with Adam in the Edenic covenant (Gen 1:28-30, 2:15-17) as He promised the Seed who would have ultimate victory (Gen. 3:15), to the covenant with Noah (Gen 9), which traveled to Abraham (Gen 15-17), Moses (Ex 19:5-6), David (2 Sam 7:12-16), and the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-33, Luk 22:20, Heb 9:15, 2 Cor 3:6), **God's mercy is what makes covenant possible**: promises kept, rescues enacted, restoration pursued.

Mercy meets suffering and guilt; Mercy is goodness standing before human guilt and suffering. The cry —"Lord have mercy"—is not only lament but invitation—to be drawn into the loving presence of God. **The cross is mercy's fullest display**: costly, substituting, reconciling.

Mercy is available now: Too often we relegate mercy to biblical heroes: “God was merciful to Adam, Noah, Abraham, to David—but not to me.” That’s a lie the enemy tells. Scripture invites us to receive mercy today.

Mercy restores presence: it repositions us to fellowship with God, alive to him.

The unwavering will of God to be merciful to humanity was instantly given after our fall:

1. In Genesis 3, the man and woman ran and hid, fear and shame a new and violent companion. And then they heard God’s voice, calling to them, “Adam, where are you?”
Mercy pursued guilt.
2. When God said: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel,” (Gen 3:15)
Mercy became a promise...of rescue.
3. When God banished the couple from Eden, from access to the Tree of Life, **Mercy became protection.**
4. In Genesis 6:6-7 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth because their constant thoughts were evil, and he said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—for I regret that I have made them.”⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. **God’s favor is mercy.**

Mercy and grace — distinction *and* unified: Arthur W. Pink draws a helpful distinction: grace is favor given: for example, the angels who never disobeyed God also receive God’s free and sovereign grace, but they will never receive his mercy. Because mercy is *compassion toward the fallen* humans. Both flow from God’s goodness. There is general mercy—God’s care for all people—and sovereign (saving) mercy, given through Christ under covenant. Rejection of God’s mercy, poured out through his Son, comes with a solemn warning: persistent scorn of God’s mercy can forfeit its eternal impact. **Mercy must be received.**

Mercy does not negate holiness or justice — they meet at the cross: Some fear mercy undermines God’s justice. The gospel answers: **Mercy Fulfills Justice.** The demands of justice are satisfied on the cross, and **mercy is poured out.** Christ’s substitution shows that **God’s holiness was never compromised; it was honored** in the price paid for our redemption.

In an illustration of God’s act of mercy: Moses pleads God from judgment to mercy:

¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’...³ Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. **But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.**” (Exodus 33:1-3).

Moses is alarmed, and rightly so, because God’s presence is safety, mercy, protection, and love. But something transformed Moses while he journeyed with God. From ignorance of who God was at the burning bush to now, Moses is confident about the truth of God’s love and mercy, and he stands firm on what he knows. So, Moses says to God,

"You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' ¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." (Ex 33:13)

Moses' understanding of God's mercy and love changed the destiny of a nation. He hears the following reassuring words,

¹⁴ *"My **Presence** will go with you, and I will give you **rest**."*

This is what all human's need—God's Presence, and God's rest.

Moses wasn't done seeking God's love, mercy, or favor. He tells God that going into a promised land flowing with milk and honey is **worthless, without God's presence**.

¹⁵ *"If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."*

Mercy is yearning for and being in God's Presence. Right there, everything changes. The Lord responds to Moses, saying,

¹⁷ *"I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."*

Moses begs God, ¹⁸ *"**Show me your glory**."* And God obliges. God not only obliges, but God also devises a plan to reveal himself to Moses. And God verbally paints his self-portrait to Moses. (Exodus 33:19-23):

¹⁹ *"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.** ²⁰ But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*

²¹ *"There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will remove my hand, and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."*

All this, **the Sovereign Creator crafts this plan to reveal himself, because Moses sought his face.** Moses dared to petition God, "I want to see you."

And the lesson about God's mercy commences: (Exodus 34:5-7 CJB version)

⁵ *The Lord [Adonai] descended in the cloud, stood with him there and pronounced the name of the Lord [Adonai]. ⁶ The Lord [Adonai] passed before him and proclaimed: ["YUD-HEH-VAV-HEH!!! Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh] The Lord [Adonai] is God, **merciful and compassionate**, slow to anger, rich in grace and truth; ⁷ showing grace to thousands of generations, forgiving offenses, crimes and sins; yet not exonerating the guilty, but causing the negative effects of the parents' offenses to be experienced by their children and grandchildren, and even by the third and fourth generations."*

Merciful to a thousand generations; allowing the guilty to bear the weight of their sin, only to a maximum of the fourth generation. **God's mercy is magnanimous.**

Paul would later declare in Romans 8:31–39:

³¹ What, then, are we to say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

*³² He who did not spare even his own Son, but gave him up on behalf of us all — is it possible that, having given us his Son, he would not give us everything else too? ³³ So who will bring a charge against God's chosen people? Certainly not God — he is the one who causes them to be considered righteous! ³⁴ Who punishes them? Certainly not the Messiah Yeshua, who died and — more than that — has been raised, is at the right hand of God and is actually **pleading on our behalf!** ³⁵⁻³⁶ Who will separate us from the love of the Messiah? Trouble? Hardship? Persecution? Hunger? Poverty? Danger? War?*

*³⁷ No, in all these things we are super conquerors, through the one who has loved us.
(CJB)*

That is the sustaining power of mercy for the Christian life. Mercy is God's love in action.

Mercy is not a policy God occasionally adopts; it is an essential attribute of his being.

If God ever stopped being merciful, he would stop being God. That is impossible. This means **mercy is reliable and unending for those who receive it.**

God's mercy is always in the middle of our anguish, healing, restoring, shoring up faith.

Mark tells us a story in chapter 5:22-41.

²² One day, Jesus was approached by a synagogue leader Jairus who came, knelt before him, ²³ and pleaded earnestly, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."

Jesus starts to go with him. But another child of God needs him too. A woman, bleeding for twelve years, probably the day Jairus' daughter came into the world, because she was 12 years old as we are told. Mark tells us that she had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors, had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. She was destitute, sick, an outcast because of her "unclean" blood status. She grasped her faith fearfully but firmly, forged her way through the crowd, quietly came up behind Jesus in the crowd and touched his cloak, the tassels on the hem,

*²⁸ because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." ²⁹ **Immediately** her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.*

She was healed. She could feel it. And yet, Jesus refused to let it end there. Mark recounts that

*³⁰ **"At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him.** He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"*

The woman is terrified. The judgment of the crowd would be swift and destructive. The disciples tell Jesus,

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you and yet you can ask, ‘**Who touched me?**’ ”

Church, our quiet, **persistent faith in Christ, activates God’s mercy.** God, through whom all things were made, in the midst of his people, kept looking around to see who had touched him. The woman confesses, trembling with fear. And Jesus says,

³⁴ “Daughter, *your faith has healed you.* Go in **peace** and be **freed from your suffering.**”

You may be inclined to think this was all about physical healing. You would be wrong. **God’s mercy always exceeds what we think we need.** She already felt healed and freed from her suffering. But Jesus gave her more. “Daughter” tied her connection to himself personally. He gave her the peace she needed, freed her from suffering—physical *and* emotional. He ended her spiritual weariness, restored her to her family and community as whole, as he let the crowd know that, as the faithful High Priest, he declared her clean, safe to touch and hold.

Then, he heads for the no longer dying but now deceased daughter of Jairus, encouraging Jairus to hold onto his faith. **Mercy commands our faith to stay strong, reassuring us along the way.** Jesus enters the home, holds the hand of the dead child, and tells *her*,

⁴¹ “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”

Mercy restores presence — it doesn’t merely pardon wrong behavior. Mercy heals, and mercy breaks death’s choke hold on to humanity.

Mercy’s chief aim is **to place us back into relationship with God** — to restore God’s presence in our lives. Forgiveness is not simply legal paperwork; it is reunion.

Mercy is costly. True mercy always has a price. The **mercy that saves, costs the life of Christ.** Test mercy against the cross.

Mercy is greater than circumstance — not conditional on fortune. Jairus was a rich leader in the synagogue, with servants at his house; the bleeding woman was broke. Jairus was named, the woman was not. Mercy pursued both.

Mercy moves into our worst moments — grief, failure, shame, addiction, death— not only into our successes.

Mercy is both general and saving — know the difference to make it experienced knowledge. God’s kindness to all people (rain, bread, opportunities) is real, but not the same as saving mercy. Saving mercy is covenantal, enacted in Christ and received by faith. Don’t confuse temporal kindness with final salvation.

Mercy demands response; it requires receiving. There is a moral logic in Scripture: scorn mercy and you forfeit its eternal work. **Receiving mercy calls for repentance, faith, and transformation.**

Mercy empowers mission — not only for our comfort.

Mercy lives —How do we embody the mercy we've received?

- **Receive Mercy Daily.** Make confessions and prayer regularly. Learn to come to the fountain of God's mercy *often*, not only when crises erupt.
- **Practice Mercy Concretely.** Forgive those who hurt you. Feed, clothe, visit, and advocate for the vulnerable. Mercy shows itself in small, ordinary acts.
- Proclaim mercy boldly. Your changed life testifies that God is merciful. Share that story.
- Be transformed; mercy calls us to holiness. Receiving mercy should produce gratitude and changed living.

Mercy is blessing and sending: When it was time for the wandering Israelites to enter the Promised Land, God gave Moses a blessing for his people that Aaron the high priest was to pronounce as a benediction (Numbers 6:24-26):

²⁴ "The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the Lord lift up his countenance (smile) upon you and give you peace."

This priestly blessing is mercy in miniature:

- "Bless you and keep you" — protection rooted in God's faithful care.
- "Make his face to shine" — God's favor and acceptance. In the Bible, the Lord's face shining is presence and delight.
- "Be gracious to you" — mercy granted, not merited.
- "Give you peace" — shalom: restored relationship, wholeness.

God's mercy not only rescues us but *equips and commissions us to be agents of his mercy.*

1. Mercy is essential (God's nature).
2. Mercy is costly (the cross).
3. Mercy restores presence (relationship).
4. Mercy reaches the worst circumstances.
5. Mercy must be received (not presumed).
6. Mercy sends us to others.

Benediction: Merciful Father, we thank you for your inexhaustible mercy and compassion. Meet each heart here—heal, forgive, restore. Send us out with the Aaronic blessing upon us: *"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."* In Jesus' name, Amen.