

Sermon Series: “Fundamentals of the Cross” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 3/14/2010

Title: “God’s Primary Nature Is One of Mercy”

Text: Ezekiel 33: 10-20

Intro.: *Illus.:* Officer Helps Save Driver in Runaway Prius

Theme: God, the Father, demonstrates his merciful attitude not only by accepting Jesus’ sacrifice for sins on the cross but also that while we are, yet, at war with him in our sin, he is working his plan to reconcile and redeem us.

Fleeing from sin’s despair into the hands of a waiting, merciful God

- Helpless, hopeless and needing someone else’s assistance – definition of a mercy moment (**Ezekiel 33:10**)
 1. Are you tired of living your life?
 - a. **Illus.:** “Old Man River”– “I gets weary and so sick of tryin' I'm tired of livin', but I'm feared of dyin'”
 - b. Our **broken relationship** (*transgressions*) and **missing the mark** (*sins*) wear us and everyone else out
 2. God offers you a life! — one that you can start living **TODAY**
 - a. *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. Romans 7:24-25*
- Turn around — **NOW!**
 1. God takes/receives no delight in our plight of sin and the destruction of a sinner (**Ezekiel 33: 11**)
 - a. His mercy nature: *The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in mercy. Psalm 103:8*
 - b. Today, is the day – God wants to relieve you of guilt, regret, bitterness, consequence, anxiety driving rebellion
 2. God invites us to turn around and go in the opposite direction
 - a. **Illus.:** Turn around – nomadic word in desert life – 1)acknowledge going wrong way; 2) stop and go back
 - b. Are you letting **pride** keep you from admitting your part in sin/brokenness? – **change your mind**
 - c. Are you willing to reject the “comfort/familiarity” of sin, stop doing it, and turn around – **run in opposite way**
 - d. *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:12-14*
 3. In his mercy God pays the freight of our return and gives us grace to move back toward him.
 - a. **Illus.:** Parking Ticket Redemption
 - b. **Fear** of God’s “unjust” reaction is the other tool Satan uses to keep us from accepting his offer(**vs. 17-20**)
 - c. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 1 John 4:18*

Mercy is tied justice and righteousness

- God’s justice and righteousness is how he gives us mercy
 1. God wants us to understand how his mercy works (**Ezekiel 33:12**)
 - a. Nothing we do saves us but a lot we do can keep us from being saved (self-righteousness)(**vs. 13**)
 - b. It is not what do but who we are that matters – righteous who are humble and wicked who are repentant (mind)
 2. God’s great exchange comes in his righteousness in Christ
 - a. *But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; Romans 3:21-22*
 - b. *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. 1 Corinthians 1:30*
- Our justice and righteousness comes as a response to what he has done for us
 1. **Illus.:** Oswald Chambers – Repentance—a response to what has already been done
 2. *Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. (NIV) Do those things that prove you have turned to God and have changed the way you think and act. (GW) Matthew 3:8*
 3. God spells out for us what just righteousness looks like (**Ezekiel 33:14-16**)
 - a. Love of God for all he has done by surrendering to his way and being devoted to righteousness
 - b. Love of my neighbor by rebuilding what I have torn down and practicing justice (unconditional grace)

Officer Helps Save Driver in Runaway Prius

AP story from March 09, 2010 :

www.foxnews.com/leisure/auto/ci.Officer+Helps+Save+Driver+in+Runaway+Prius.opinionPrint

Turn Around

Repentance is not basically a religious word. It comes from a culture where people were essentially nomadic and lived in a world with no maps or street signs. It's easy to get lost walking through the desert. You become aware that the countryside is strange. You finally say to yourself, *I'm going in the wrong direction*. That's the first act of repentance. The second act of repentance is to go in an alternate direction. It implies that you not only do this but you admit it to your companions. We all do this whether or not we realize it. **Gordon MacDonald, "Repentance," Preaching Today, Tape No. 121**

Parking Ticket Redemption

Forgiveness was in the air Saturday, December 18th, 2004, in Boise, Idaho. That's where a cross-denominational group of pastors gathered outside of city hall and sat at tables for three hours with checkbook in hand. The members of the Treasure Valley Pastors Association proceeded to write checks to the city on behalf of those with unpaid parking tickets. The much-publicized event called Grace Gift/Paid in Full Project was not all that complicated. To take advantage of the free offer, those with outstanding violations simply had to acknowledge their guilt by showing up and asking for the payment. Up to \$10,000 was earmarked for the unprecedented demonstration of forgiveness. The money was raised from local businesses and was made available on a first-come-first-served basis. "We wanted to help people understand, in a practical way, that even though we've all made mistakes, God's grace and forgiveness is received, just by asking," said Montie Ralstin, Pastor of Boise Valley Christian Communion and president of the pastors' association sponsoring the event. Although the offer struck many as too-good-to-be-true, not all who heard about the modern-day parable were positively impressed. Some thought the pastors should donate the monies raised to charities that helped the poor. Responding to that criticism, Pastor Michael Boerner remarked, "I would agree, I think it's a really poor use of finances just to pay someone's parking ticket if that's all it was, but really it's not about that." **Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois; source: KBCI TV 2 News (12-15-04) and Parkingticketgrace.com**

Parkingticketgrace.com

Repentance—a response to what is already done

It is not repentance that saves me; repentance is the sign that I realize what God has done in Christ Jesus. The danger is to put the emphasis on the effect instead of on the cause. Is it my obedience that puts me right with God? Never! I am put right with God because prior to all else, Christ died. When I turn to God and by belief accept what God reveals, instantly the stupendous atonement of Jesus Christ rushes me into a right relationship with God. By the miracle of God's grace I stand justified, not because of anything I have done, but because of what Jesus has done. The salvation of God does not stand on human logic; it stands on the sacrificial death of Jesus. Sinful men and women can be changed into new creatures by the marvelous work of God in Christ Jesus, which is prior to all experience. **Oswald Chambers quoted in So Great Salvation, Charles Ryrie, Victor Books, 1989, p. 91ff.**

Ezekiel 33:10-20

¹⁰ "Son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'This is what you are saying: "Our transgressions and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?" '

¹¹ Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'

¹² "Therefore, son of man, say to your countrymen, 'The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys, and the wickedness of the wicked man will not cause him to fall when he turns from it. The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness.'

¹³ If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done.

¹⁴ And if I say to the wicked man, 'You will surely die,' but he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right--
¹⁵ if he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die. ¹⁶ None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live.

¹⁷ "Yet your countrymen say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is their way that is not just. ¹⁸ If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. ¹⁹ And if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so. ²⁰ Yet, O house of Israel, you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you according to his own ways." [NIV]