

Resonate

BIBLE STUDY

**“GOD’S GREATEST HITS:
SWEET CHILD OF MINE”**

Mercy and Grace: two words that are used so often to describe God. I believe we often forfeit their meaning through overuse. The power that is in the words transforms lives for eternity. We have been receivers of both if we have accepted Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior. (If anyone wishes to talk more about this, please talk to your root group leader. They would willingly answer any questions you may have.) This week we will study these words from a receivers' standpoint. For that is what we are. Receivers of mercy and grace! Receiver, be reminded this week of all that God has done for you.



Today's Scripture:
John 8:2-11

The Word

I love to eat salt. I always have. As a child, I would sneak into the cabinet and eat the seasoned popcorn salt straight out of the container. I was not supposed to do this but I would do it anyway. One day, I walked out of the kitchen after my "binge" and saw my mom. She had "the look". She asked me, "Did you eat some of that popcorn salt?" I quickly answered, "no," as I proudly remembered that I had washed my hands to hide the evidence. (Yes, I am a salt addict and a liar!) She then said to me, "Go to the bathroom and look in the mirror." What I saw was a horrendous sight, I had orange popcorn salt smeared all over my face. The evidence was there. I could no longer deny it. I had eaten salt. I was caught red-handed, or should I say orange-faced.

This is just a light story compared to the evidence brought against a certain woman in the Bible. She was caught in the act of adultery. She was not asked to go look into the mirror, but to look at the face of God.

John 8:2-11

²At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to

them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Verse 2: The sun is rising. Jesus steps into the temple courts. All sorts of people gathered around, men and women, young and old, rich and poor. They desired to hear the Teacher's words. What would He tell them today? What could they learn? There was an air of excitement. Jesus sat down to begin teaching.

Verse 3: Suddenly, a group of religious leaders broke loudly into the scene. People are confused as they hear shouting. A woman is forced to stand before them. They had dragged this woman in. I wonder if she showed bruises from where they had grabbed her. Only they knew from how far away they brought this woman. How frightening it would have been for this woman to be in the middle of a crowd of angry men. She was scared. And now she was humiliated as they force her to stand in front of everyone. These were people of her community. Some were neighbors, friends, maybe even relatives. She recognized the faces. They knew who she was. This was not a stranger. Yet, the woman knew how quickly these people could turn on her. She was in danger because of what she had done.

Verse 4-5: She had been caught in the act of adultery. There was no denying her guilty verdict. These men may have walked into the middle of the scene. She would have had to quickly dress, not knowing her fate. For legally, adulterers, both the man and the woman, would have been stoned. This was stated in the law of Moses.

The law of Moses is the first 5 books of the Old Testament, known by our Jewish friends as the Torah. These books document the beginning of the world, the beginning of the Jewish religion, as well as the beginning of Jewish society. God gave laws to govern the people, to provide order and protection of the nation. The law they are referring to is found in Leviticus 20:10.

Leviticus 20:10

¹⁰ "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.

This woman realized that this was reality. She may have only a few moments to live. She knew she was a lawbreaker. There was no denying her guilt. She looked around and there was no one coming to her defense. And her boyfriend? He was nowhere to be found. She was all alone in a crowd. The death penalty had been proclaimed. The prosecution shuts his book with a smile, knowing that the Judge had to declare “Guilty”.

Verse 6: These men were all proud of themselves, thinking they had just trapped Jesus. If he agreed to send this woman to death, He could have been in trouble with the Roman government. The Romans were in charge of Israel. They did not allow the Jews to carry out the death penalty. By agreeing to stone this woman, the religious leaders could have had Jesus arrested by the Romans. On the other hand, if Jesus did not uphold the law of Moses than he would have been demoralized in front of the people. They viewed Jesus as a religious Teacher. If He did not support the law, then he would lose popularity with the people and gain the disdain of the Jews who love the law and recognize it as God’s Word. To go against the Word, would be against God Himself. Yes, they had been clever in their trap. But they did not realize they were talking to the One who wrote the law!

What did Jesus do? He leaned over and began to write on the ground. We do not know what to write and we will not add to the Scripture by speculating. But what is obvious is that this is strange behavior. This is not your normal debate tactic. I have to wonder (this is just speculation) was He doing this to get all the eyes on Him and off of her? Was this the first show of grace extended to the woman: to take away those gawking at her and bring their attention to the Teacher playing in the dirt?

Imagine a court scene. The criminal is about to receive the verdict. Reporters are snapping away as the obviously guilty person awaits the death penalty. The head is hung in shame, waiting for the predicted outcome. Suddenly, the eyes move to the Judge. Bulbs are flashing as more and more people turn their attention to the Judge writing in the dirt. For a few moments, in a crowd, the woman can be alone as the stares are no longer on her.

Verse 7: Jesus continued his writing while the religious leaders became more and more adamant in asking their questions. Look at the difference: Jesus is calmly writing while the leaders become more and more demanding. Suddenly, the Writer sits up, looks the men in their eyes and

speaks “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

The prosecution is judged, not the defendant. The criminal is no longer on trial but the men who brought the accusations. The trial takes a twisted turn. The “innocent” are now standing with the woman as guilty. With one statement, they went from questioning Jesus to questioning themselves.

Verse 8-9: Only Jesus stayed the same. He went back to writing in the sand. Was this more grace? Did he extend grace to the ones who had tried to trap Him? He let them walk away without staring them down. He could have watched them squirm, ensnared in their own deceit. Instead, Jesus looked down. He heard them leave one by one. It seems that even the crowd that had gathered to hear Him teach left. They, too, were convicted by the statement. Only Jesus was there, stooped over in His seated position, writing in the sand. The woman was still standing where the men had forced her to be. She was no longer in front of the crowd. She could have run away. But she didn’t. She stood where she was in her guilt and her shame with the man who had just saved her life.

Verse 10: Since Jesus had been seated, when he straightened up from the ground, He would have been looking up to the woman standing there. This is the physical picture of grace. It is the willingness to forfeit the right to look down on someone in judgment but instead look up to her from a position of humility.

From here, Jesus spoke, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” The term “woman” in that culture was kind way to address her. What other names did the crowd call her? What other names had she called herself? But here, she receives the grace of a courteous address.

Verse 11: She replies in respect. She does not know who this Man is. But she knows he is worthy of honor. She waits for His reply. It is a reply of mercy. “Then, neither do I condemn you...” Jesus had the right to judge her. He was the only one in that crowd who had never sinned. He honestly could have been the first to throw a stone at her. But instead of giving her what she deserved, which is judgment, He gave her what she did not deserve, mercy. And His mercy continued as He does not hold her past against her but instead exhorts her to change her life.

There is another court scene. You are the defendant. You are guilty as charged and you know it. The prosecution makes its case and smiles knowing the Judge must declare you guilty. You deserve it, there is no denying it. Your shame and guilt hang around you. The mob stands ready, willing to let you die for your sins. Suddenly, a voice says, "I'll take her place." All eyes are drawn to the Judge. He puts down His gavel and takes off His black robe. He commands the police officer to take off your shackles and put them on Him. He tell you, "I do not condemn you for I will condemn Myself instead. I will take your place. Go and sin, no more." They lead Him out for execution. That is the mercy of the cross.

Application

Spend time in worship to the God of grace and mercy.

Confess your sins. Write a prayer asking for the mercy of God.

Where is Jesus asking you to receive His mercy and now to leave your life of sin? How are you going to walk away from it? Who can hold you accountable?

To what person in your life are you like the religious leaders, bringing accusations against this person? How can you be more like Jesus to that person?

DAY 2

Today's Scripture:
Titus 3:4-7

The Word

You are a wretch. Did that hurt your feelings? It's the truth. Sometimes, we need to hear the truth. We often forget how terrible we are. We think of ourselves as "good" people. If we do think we have done something wrong, we justify it by saying, "it's not that bad". Meaning, even in our "badness" there is good because it is not as bad as someone else who must be worse. The Scriptures, however, paint a different picture on our true selves.

Titus 3:3

³At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Verse 3: This is not what positive speakers tell you to say. But do something for me. Read this verse in first person. That is a definition of who you are. In fact, let's read it together in the modern paraphrase from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson:

It wasn't so long ago that we ourselves were stupid and stubborn, dupes of sin, ordered every which way by our glands, going around with a chip on our shoulder, hated and hating back.

There is nothing pretty there. There is nothing likeable. There is nothing worth redeeming. That is who you were before Christ. Look at yourself. You were nothing but misery to yourself and others. "Why are you torturing us?" you may ask. Because I want you to know that there was nothing in you that deserved the grace and mercy of God. Nothing. There was no part of you that moved God to be merciful. It had nothing to do with you. It is just the character of God. He is merciful and full of grace. It is part of who He is.

Titus 3:4-7

⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through

Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Verse 4: When did the kindness and love of God appear? The moment Jesus stepped on earth. Now, God had been kind and loving since the beginning. However, it was when Jesus stepped into time as God becoming man that the fullness of kindness and love was made evident to the world. This is more readily understood from John 1:14:

John 1:14

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Verse 5: Jesus came to save us. That was His purpose in coming. His reasoning behind salvation was not because we were somewhat good and so God said, “Look at them trying really hard, let’s help them the rest of the way to salvation.” It had nothing to do with our “good works”. It all had to do with His character of mercy. We cannot move Him to salvation. In fact, in our natural selves, we shake our fists at His salvation. We want to do things our way and in our own strength.

This is a debate in many denominations. They believe that good works get you into heaven. Others believe that the cross plus good works ensures salvation. Still I have heard, that the cross initially gets you salvation but then you must do good works or you could lose your salvation. These maddening lies are all wrong. It has nothing to do with us. We cannot earn or keep salvation. It is only by the mercy of God. He alone saved us. By ourselves, we are covered with sin. That is all we are capable of doing. God washed us clean when we were “born again”. (This is the “rebirth”. We are born once physically and we must be born spiritually in order to be saved for eternity.)

We are not only washed at the rebirth but also by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. This means that God continues to extend mercy and grace to us. He has given us the Holy Spirit to renew us. We were in dead in our transgression, in our wretched ways, now we have the Spirit within us to continue to transform us from ourselves to more like Christ.

Verse 6: The giving of the Spirit was the pinnacle example of grace. It was nothing we deserved. It was a gift from heaven. God Himself within us. Think of this marvelous truth. God is in you. You have all the wisdom, character, joy and all of God inside of you. That he would be willing to

allow these messy tents to be the house of God Himself is amazing grace. This gift was given to us at the because of Jesus.

Verse 7: Jesus died on the cross as a perfect substitute for us. We deserved to die for our sins. But Jesus took our place. The Sinless died for the sinners. His death enabled Him to justify us. This means we criminals, who had broken God's law, now have perfect records. Our crimes are not only not held against us but it is as if they had never occurred. We are justified before God. We did not have the right to ask for justification. But God gave it through His grace. Now that we are justified we are children, heirs, of God looking forward to eternity with Him. What you were is no longer held against you. Instead of looking back onto your past sine, you can look forward to your new life. This is what Grace and Mercy does. It washes away the past so that you can walk boldly with joy into the future.

If you are struggling today with any past sins, bring them to the cross. Lay them down. Realize you do not have to work to make up for what you did. Christ did all the work. He is extending His grace and mercy to you. Receive it.

Application

How does believing we are good people keep us from salvation?

What is the importance of understanding who we were before Christ?

Why do we desire to work for salvation?

How does trying to do “good works” for the sake of ensuring salvation keep us from Christ?

In what ways do you work for salvation? Confess it and lay it at the cross.



Today's Scripture:

Luke 7:36-50

The Word

God is merciful. God is full of grace. God extends mercy and grace upon us, even when we were unlovely in our sins. We did nothing to move the heart of God to this kindness. It is only by His nature that we were recipients of these extravagant gifts. Mercy prevented us from getting the judgment we deserved, for it was inflicted on His son. Grace is all the good gifts He gives though we are worthy of nothing. If we cannot earn mercy and grace, but they are given, what are we to do? Worship. This is the only response we have to a God of mercy and grace. No better is this illustrated by a nameless woman who shames us all with her heart of praise.

Luke 7:36-50

³⁶Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. ³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that

she is a sinner." ⁴⁰Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. ⁴¹"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. ⁴⁴Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Verse 36: Jesus has accepted an invitation for dinner at a Pharisee's house. The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. If you wanted someone to write an essay on the appropriate ways to worship God, these guys would be the ones to ask. They knew when it was appropriate to stand, sit, kneel, or lie prostrate on the floor. They could tell you the words to say. They would have had multiple of verses and psalms memorize to recite to the Lord. These were your experts.

Verse 37: In the middle of this dinner, a shocking scene takes place. A woman walked in uninvited. She was not just any woman, she was a sinful woman, most likely a prostitute. Imagine a prostitute walking into a dinner at the preacher's house. She had probably been made fun of by this group, maybe used as the illustration of vileness, and was never spoken to by any of them. They would have walked clear away from her if they saw her on the streets. Their judgments of her would have been known to her. Yet, still she came. What brought her? She had heard Jesus, the Preacher of preachers, was at the house. So, she risked humiliation and rejection and walked in. She was carrying a jar of alabaster, probably all she owned in the world.

Verse 38: If you are familiar with this story, do not rush over it because of familiarity. She is standing behind Jesus at first. She is sobbing. The tears pour out and her cry fills the silent rooms. Everyone is watching her. She cannot control herself. She cannot even speak. Tears will not stop. They fall on His feet. She sees the tears falling on Him. In a moment of abandon of reason, she falls at His feet and begins to wipe His feet with tears. She had not rationally brought a towel. This was not planned out. She had grabbed a jar of perfume and headed to the Pharisee's home. I

don't know if she fully knew what she would do there. She just had to come. Once she saw Him, the tears flowed. While she is wiping His feet, she kisses them. She pours perfume on them. It was as if she was saying, I don't deserve to kiss your face or to pour perfume on your head. You know who I am and what I have done.

Verse 39: She was not the only one who recognized her evil ways. The Pharisee had his opinion on her as well as Jesus. In his twisted mind, he thought that a true prophet would kick this woman out. Isn't that what religious people do? We inform them, "Your kind is not allowed in here". Their dress, their actions, their speech, their lifestyle does not conform to ours so we block them out. But God handles them, and handles us, differently.

Verse 40-43: Jesus uses an illustration to show Simon, the Pharisee, his wrong understanding of the situation. Simon was seeing a woman in debt of sin. He saw this massive heap of wrongs piled up on this one woman. Yet, he never saw his sin. In comparison to her, he was "good". In comparison to God, Simon owed a debt that could not be paid back. Both needed a cancellation of debt. When we see our debt of sin and allow God to cancel it in mercy, love should spring forth in us. But we must realize His mercy in order to respond in worship.

Verse 44-45: Jesus has turned the tables on us again. When the woman walks in, we see a prostitute, a woman of sin who barges in uninvited. Yet, suddenly we realize, she was the true hostess of the night. The Pharisee neglected the common practices of courtesy for that culture. The Pharisee has purposely not made Jesus feel welcomed in his home, yet the woman makes it evident that Jesus was welcome in the home of her heart. This hostess receives commendation from her guest.

Verse 47-48: His eyes are on her. He can smell the perfume that had been bought by the money she earned from her profession. He can hear her wailing. Suddenly, He stops speaking to Simon and speaks directly to her. She hears His voice. Mercy. The forgiveness of sins. Mercy. She received mercy. Who ever gave that to her, a prostitute? She had been used by men, never the recipient of mercy. Now, she was the recipient of the mercy of God Himself. A God who did allow even a prostitute to come near.

Verse 49-50: The other guests are not happy with His proclamation. They murmur among themselves, saying righteous and pious things. But Jesus doesn't care. He is looking at someone who has received salvation. Only

one that night had faith in Jesus. The one that society had cast away as worthless, disgusting, wretched, beyond hope was the one who was saved. It was the religious leaders who missed the peace of knowing that God has saved them.

Application

Ask God to show you if you have any person, or groups of people, that you condemn. Ask Him to help you to see them through His eyes.

Why is our praise not lavish like this woman's worship?

How can we begin to live as people who love the God of mercy and grace?



Today's Scripture:
Hebrews 4:14-16

The Word

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of

grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Verse 14: Jesus is compared to a high priest. What was a high priest? The Nelson's Bible Illustrated Dictionary defines this position this way:

...a chief priest of the Hebrew people...The high priest was distinguished from his fellow priest by the clothes he wore, the duties he performed, and the particular requirements placed upon him as spiritual head of God's people...its holder had to be without physical defect as well as holy in conduct...He could participate in all priestly ministry, but certain functions were given only to him...The most important responsibility of the high pries was to conduct the service on the Day of Atonement... On this day, he alone entered the Holy Place inside the veil before God. Having made sacrifices for himself and for the people, he brought the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, "God's throne". This he did to make atonement for himself and the people for all their sins committed during the year just ended. It is with this particular service that the ministry of Jesus as high priest is compared...

To atone for the sin of the people, a sacrifice was made each year by the high priest. This sacrifice was just a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. The priest had to offer a yearly animal sacrifice. But the death of Jesus was for once and all. So, when Jesus went to the heavens, He was sprinkling His blood on the mercy seat. We can hold onto our faith firmly for this sacrifice is eternal. It is solid, not wavering, not needing to be repeated. We can stand firm in faith in Christ's work as high priest.

Verse 15: Our high priest can relate to us. Christ was not removed from us. He left the glory of heaven to become like us. He experienced the "earth life". He faced temptation, every kind of temptation. Yet, he never sinned. So, He knows how it feels to be tempted. He can relate to you in your struggles. Remember, being tempted is not wrong; it is falling into temptation that causes sin.

Verse 16: Because of Christ being our High Priest, we can approach the throne of grace with confidence. Basically, we can come to God with every need, every situation, every success, every failure, every feeling, every thought, everything! We do not have to beg to come in. We do not have to hope we will be let in. We do not have to bribe our way in. We can come confidently for we know the Christ paved the way for us to come. This is such a privilege that we take for granted. We forget that our relationship with God came through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. It cost Jesus His life to make a relationship with God available. This Nelson's Illustrated Bible describes atonement:

...the act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings. The word can be broken into three parts which express this great truth in simple but profound terms: "at-one-ment." Through God's atoning grace and forgiveness, we are reinstated to a relationship of at-one-ment with God, in spite of our sin.

We are state of being "at one" with God because of our High Priest's sacrifice. Our severed relationship has been restored. We were once at odds with God and now we are at peace with Him. So, we can come to Him in confidence. We can confess our sins and know that we will receive mercy. We can explain our problems and know that we will find grace to help us. God is on His throne willing to give grace and mercy to any who come. Are you willing to approach Him today?

Praise Jesus for being a High Priest who made the ultimate sacrifice for us to approach the throne of God. Thank the Lord for the mercy and grace we find there.

Application

How is it comforting to know that Jesus is a High Priest that can relate to us?

When should we approach the throne of grace? How often do we?

How does grace and mercy cover every situation we are in?



Today's Scripture:
Luke 23:32-33

The Word

We have studied the attributes of God: Mercy and Grace. We titled this week “Sweet Child of Mine”. This amazing fact is that God, in His mercy and grace, calls us to be His children. He knows our rebellion, our confusion, our inconsistencies yet He wanted us to be His own. He extends His arms out and shows us scars from His crucifixion that says, “Child, I love you this much”. He wraps those arms around us, to hold us for eternity. Sometimes, we forget the sacrifice that He made in order to speak mercy and grace to us. But there is one who was there. He knows. He only had a short time left. But those arms of mercy reached out to Him before it was too late. He was the criminal who became a child.

Luke 23:32-33

³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

Verse 32-33: Three men were led to their deaths. Three men walked the road to execution. Two were guilty as charged. They were placed on either side of the innocent One. Jesus was in the center, arms stretched out to both of them. Nails were driven in His wrists and His feet. Blood was flowing. Pain was searing through His body. All of them were suffering. As if the physical torture was not enough, verbal insults began to be reeled at Jesus.

Luke 23:35-37

³⁵The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." ³⁶The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

Verse 35-37: Mockery. Pain. Torture. Humiliation. God Himself on a cross. Suddenly, a new person adds to the verbal abuse.

Luke 23:39

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

Verse 39: You would think someone in the same predicament would sympathize. Yet, this man, also on a cross, joins in the mockery. What is it in us that joins in to make fun of others? All of us are people, we are all in the same predicament, yet we will add our abuse in a crowd. It is as foolish as a crucified man putting down another crucified Man. But one voice comes to His defense.

Luke 23:40-41

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Verse 40-41: It is not a disciple who comes to the rescue. It is not even a decent citizen. It is a criminal. That criminal had more sense than the people in the crowd. In a short amount of time, he had observed Jesus enough to recognize Him as innocent. And he confesses himself as guilty and deserving of the punishment. He realized the weight of his guilt to the point where he did not feel like he could ask for mercy.

Luke 23:42

⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Verse 42: To be remembered in the kingdom of God was a request for grace. He knew he did not deserve heaven so he could not ask for mercy, the forgiveness of his sins. But he asks to just be remembered. That, he knew, would be grace, a gift, beyond what he deserved. He just did not realize that he was looking Mercy in the face.

Luke 23:43

⁴³Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Verse 43: A criminal receives a pardon. That is mercy. A criminal gains eternal life. That is grace. In a moment of time, this man receives both. He came to the cross and received mercy and grace.

The same is true today. Criminals are still being pardoned and receiving eternal life. They realize that the world scorns the true way to God. They go against the crowd and confess their guilt to Christ while acknowledging His perfection. Then they ask for what they do not deserve and receive mercy and grace.

Praise God for when you received mercy and grace at the cross. If you have not done this or are unsure about this, please talk to your root group leader. They would love to share with you their journey to the cross.

Application

Who do you know that needs the mercy of salvation? Pray for that person here.

We are often disgusted by the people in the world and their lifestyles. How can we stop judging them, since we once were under the same sentence that they are under, and begin to reach out to them in mercy and grace?

Write your own personal definitions for the words “mercy” and “grace”.