

February 19, 2017

“The Mercy of the King”
Matthew 9:27-34

FCF: Trust issues with others and God

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Jesus is the one true King
(magnet) to whom we must bow. And can turn.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

There is a new movie about the Great Wall of China. From the trailers, it would appear to overlay the facts with a bit of fiction. But the real history is worth knowing ([READ PI quote](#)):

In ancient China, the people desired to get security from the barbaric, invading hordes from the north. To get this protection, they built the Great Wall of China. It's 30 feet high, 18 feet thick, and more than 1,500 miles long!

The Chinese goal was to build an absolutely impenetrable defense - too high to climb over, too thick to break down, and too long to go around. But during the first hundred years of the wall's existence China was successfully invaded three times.

It wasn't the wall's fault. During all three invasions, the barbaric hordes never climbed over the wall, broke it down, or went around it; they simply bribed the gatekeeper and then marched right in through an open door.

One could think that this would eventually impact the job interview for “Great Wall Gatekeeper”.

Such betrayal would bring great disappointment, disillusionment, and distrust. Which is sad and common to human experience, to relationships between flawed fallen people. Which is to say a couple of things. First, with one another, it's not a matter of if but when. And second, with Jesus, there is no if or when, no grounds for distrust. And why? The mercy of the King.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Matthew 9:27-34](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Matthew wants us to recognize Jesus as the King, the anointed long-awaited Deliverer. And to see the tension. Throughout His ministry, Jesus was misunderstood. He repeatedly disrupted the common expectations about the kingdom. Yet all the while, because of His words and deeds, through His teachings and miracles, the news began to spread and hope began to rise.

So much so that we read of events such as this ([READ Matthew 9:27](#)). “Son of David” - this is the first time Jesus is addressed this way. Though it's not the first such reference. We read that back in the genealogy of Matthew 1. And there have been echoes of this ever since. Jesus is “great David's greater son”. He is the One come to establish a universal and eternal reign upon the earth, restoring not just a royal line or the lives of His people but the whole created order.

Jesus has come as the one true King. But that begs a question. What kind of king? We get hints of the answer in the heartfelt cry of these two men and the events surrounding it. All of which makes clear that Jesus is the one true King to whom we must bow. And can turn.

Such is the mercy of the King. A mercy that our text shows in three ways. First, the power of His mercy. Second, the patience of His mercy. Third, the perseverance of His mercy.

I. THE POWER OF HIS MERCY

First, the power of Jesus' mercy. That is, the sovereignty of His rule and reign.

A) Desperate Needs

Over what looks to be a short span of time, Jesus is confronted with two desperate needs.

1. The blind men

It begins with this ([READ Matthew 9:27](#)). We don't know much of their story. We do know they couldn't visually see the world around them. But they were able to perceive who Jesus is.

2. The mute man

Their need was followed with yet another ([READ Matthew 9:32](#)). We don't know much of his story either. We do know his physical condition was separated out from this demonic possession, that such spirits are real and their presence felt, and that because of a demon this man was mute.

B) Declarative Words

Jesus was confronted with desperate needs. And He met them with declarative words.

1. Sight gained

First, for these blind men ([READ Matthew 9:28-30a](#)). With but a word, the Maker and Sustainer of all things restores a part of His creation and these men gain (or perhaps regain) their sight.

2. Freedom granted

Then, for the mute man ([READ Matthew 9:33a](#)). It's not explicitly stated but it's implied that, with a word, the rightful Heir to the throne rebukes and drives out this trespassing, harassing, and vandalizing insurrectionist. The demon is cast out and this man is now able to speak.

Such is the power of Jesus' mercy. He has no rival and ultimately faces no competition.

Illustration:

News reports say the Earth isn't spinning as fast as it once did. Scientists have examined the data and concluded that the solar day is lengthening at about 1.8 milliseconds per century. What hand could be great enough to slow down the turning of a planet? Well, it may have to do with the movement of the tides. But who controls the tides and can still the waves with a word?

Application:

Such is the power behind the mercy of the King. This mercy begins with feeling. But then moves to action. A couple of things are worth noting here. First, the subjects of the King should see in His mercy an example for their own. Our hearts are to be moved and then our feet.

So His mercy is our example. But it is also our hope. For we should know ourselves not only as people who show such mercy but need it. And so we look to Him expectantly for wisdom in decisions, strength in temptation, endurance in trial, and peace amidst the storms.

Jesus is the King to whom we must bow and can turn, knowing the power of His mercy.

II. THE PATIENCE OF HIS MERCY

Which takes us to this - the patience of His mercy. That is, His wisdom and care.

A) Their Flawed Expectations

Looking just at these two blind men, we need to see they came with flawed expectations.

1. The reasoning

How so? Here's the reasoning. They likely knew the ancient prophecies (**READ Isaiah 35:5-6a**). If Jesus is the Messiah, then He could heal them. He would surely have mercy upon them.

2. The assumptions

But then they made a leap as to the shape of His mercy. They assumed He would see that they could not see. He would recognize their blindness as their greatest need and act swiftly on it.

B) His Fuller Agenda

How does that play out? Yes, Jesus is merciful. But He clearly has a fuller agenda.

1. The testing

Jesus begins by testing them. It's not what we would expect but He initially ignores their plea and goes inside - possibly because of political overtones and concern of being misunderstood.

2. The questioning

So He tests them by turning from them. But they follow. So then Jesus questions them. But for whose sake? Not His but theirs. Why? Likely, to draw them out. To mature their budding faith, to push them in their stance, to encourage them to see more before He actually heals their sight.

This is the patience of His mercy. This is the unhurried wisdom and care of the King.

Illustration:

Years ago, we had a science experiment running in our house. It began with a hanging mesh bag of caterpillars. These little guys then formed their cocoons and, after a few weeks, emerged with wings as moths ready to fly. Here's the thing. You have to let the metamorphosis run its course. If you pry into the cocoon to see or to move things along, you will end up with stunted development - wings too small or frail to fly. The outcome simply cannot be rushed.

Application:

Much of what Jesus does with us is the same. He has a fuller agenda that cannot be rushed. And so He will not be hurried. Of course, we're usually not terribly interested in that. We prefer our fast food, minute rice, microwaves, and instapots. Put another way, we want quick relief and resolution to our problems at work, to the sickness of our bodies, and to the struggles of our families. We'd prefer a book when it comes to the lessons that come only through pain.

Of course we would. But there comes a time when that natural longing bends in such a direction that it needs to be checked. Consider Job. There came a point when he needed to hear some hard words (**READ Job 38:1-4**). "Where were you?" says the omnipotent omniscient God. He will not be rushed. He will not be hurried. Such is His wisdom and care directed towards us.

Jesus is the King to whom we must bow and turn, knowing the patience of His mercy.

III. THE PERSEVERANCE OF HIS MERCY

Which then brings us to this final point. In addition to the power and patience of His mercy, there is then also its perseverance. That is, the faithful toughness of His love for us.

A) Stubborn Resistance

How so? We see it plainly in the stubborn resistance Jesus meets in in this account.

1. The blind men healed

Consider these blind men (**READ Matthew 9:30-31**). Jesus urges them to keep it quiet, to not trumpet this in the streets. Why? He has a mission and needs to control the mob. So how do they respond? They believed enough to cry for His help. But not enough obey His commands.

2. The Pharisees

But that's hardly the worst of it. Then there are the Pharisees (**READ Matthew 9:33-34**). These are religious authorities, experts in the Scriptures. They can see something has happened here. But they have no category for it. They reason, "This can't be of God. So it must be of Satan."

B) Still Relentless

Do you see the resistance Jesus meets? How does He respond? With a relentlessness.

1. Surely disappointed

Oh, He surely had to be disappointed at what He found that day. Just as when He asked His disciples later, "Are you so slow to understand?" Just as when He wept over Jerusalem. Just as at Bethany outside the tomb of His friend Lazarus He fumed over the impact of sin and death.

2. But not deterred

Oh, how disappointed He had to have been. But He was not deterred. He continued to teach and to heal - no matter how well the people grasped who He is or what He was doing. For there is a tenacity and toughness to His love, a relentless commitment to His Father. And to us.

This is the perseverance of Jesus' mercy, a steadiness that cannot be knocked off course.

Illustration:

Think of the football player who suits up for the game with a brace and plays on broken leg. Imagine the basketball player who goes up for the layup, gets slammed to the floor, but then pops up to play some more. Such is the tenacity to Jesus' purpose, the toughness of His love.

Application:

Here's the good news. Jesus is not like us. Be honest. We're halfway through February. How are those New Year's resolutions going so far? He is not like us. Nor are His ways what we're used to. How many broken promises or empty commitments have we endured? Again, Jesus is our model, our example in a world starving for such. But He's much more than that.

Don't you see? Jesus, this merciful King, knows our many blind spots. He endures our regressing on the same old lessons and asking the same old questions. And He sticks with us. Not with a stoic grimace or folded arms. But with arms open and a ready glad welcome. This is a covenantal love. A love that can bring relief and release, that allows transparency and trust.

This is the King to whom we must bow and turn, knowing the perseverance of His mercy.

CONCLUSION:

If you ask me, “What are you reading these days?” you’ll often get a surprising answer. Right now, I’m reading through the Harry Potter books. I should say I’m “rereading” them since I read them to our kids when they were young but am now going through them just for myself.

I can’t say who is my favorite character but I’m certainly drawn to Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts. He’s the only one whose power can keep Voldemort in check. He’s the only one whose wisdom can be trusted. And his is a mercy that never fails. Case in point, the end of *The Chamber of Secrets*. By that point in the story, Harry has broken a slew of rules - more than you can shake a wand at. But instead of punishing him, Dumbledore rewards him for his bravery and then offers some profound counsel. Harry is doubting and questioning himself. To which Dumbledore says ([READ quote](#)), “It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.” It’s a great moment, the kind of thing you see throughout the series.

My point? What does this have to do with the mercy of Jesus? His mercy, His strength and love, is so powerful and compelling that we hear echoes of it in our most treasured stories. History and reality overflow into legend and fiction. Such is Jesus’ greatness and goodness that it cannot be contained and continually finds ways of expressing itself. Oh, if we had eyes to see!

He is the one true King to whom we must bow. And to whom then we can turn.

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