

## MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

*Tuesday, January 24, 2017*

# Love Mercy

## Luke 10:25-37

**Definition:** The prophet Micah tells us in his book, "He has shown you, O man, what is GOOD and what the Lord REQUIRES of you: Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). This verse alone contains great words to live by. We love mercy when we realize that we are the ones in need of mercy every day. In realizing our need of mercy, and the fact, God gives us mercy, we are able to better show His mercy to others.

### Segment Questions:

- From the requirements of Micah 6:8, what does "love mercy" mean?
- What was the heart of the lawyer, who knew the Law very well, as he confronts Jesus? What was he seeking?
- When we encounter Scripture or stories, we often enter into the story as well, or identify with someone in the story. Who do you perceive yourself as in the story? Why?
- What do you think of the lawyer's answer, "The one who showed him mercy" as the answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?"
- What is Jesus saying? Who is our neighbor? Everyone? Just the ones who show us mercy?
- Why is important that we identify with the bloodied, broken man in the ditch?

### Action Questions:

- Which of the requirements of Micah 6:8 are most difficult for you? What steps can you take to improve your opportunities to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?
- Realizing your need for mercy can be a double edged sword. Not enough realization could lead to a haughty, holier-than-thou attitude that leaves a burned path of destruction as you "spread the truth." Too much realization of your need for mercy could lead to paralyzing self-doubt that renders you ineffective in God's work. How can we balance these two in our lives?
- What "neighbor" of yours in need of your compassion and mercy? Is there something preventing you from giving it?
- In our story, we can also view the church as the Innkeeper. God, the Good Samaritan, provides everything we need to extend compassion and mercy to the broken. What are some ideas to corporately love mercy and extend it?

Micah 6:8 is one of those verses that keeps popping into my mind throughout the week. The verse itself is an axiom to live by: "He has shown you, O man, what is GOOD and what the Lord REQUIRES of you: Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." Simple enough, right? 3 things of what is required of us. "Do justly" or do what is right is sometimes hard enough to navigate in the waves of culture, but we have already studied aspects of this with our axioms, "To the core of my being," "Always take the high road," and "Choose love." It has been fruitful (and fun) putting these axioms into practice in day-to-day life. Back to Micah 6:8, I would argue the third directive is the most important, "Walk humbly with your God." That is what keeps us centered and focused. Oh, and do not skip the word "humbly." But what does it mean to love mercy? Let's look at a famous story from the mouth of Jesus – the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.

A lawyer stands up to test Jesus and asks, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responds by turning it back on the lawyer and asks what the Law says. The lawyer correctly summarizes, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as himself. Jesus tells him that he has answered correctly. "Do this and you will live." The lawyer, trying to justify himself asks, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus tells a story about a Good Samaritan. This is an oxymoron like Jumbo Shrimp. Good Samaritans did not exist. Samaritans were despised and unclean. They tried to worship on their own mountain and not at the Temple. But Jesus tells them this story:

A man was walking the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and robbers jumped him, stripped him, and beat him, leaving him half dead. By chance, a priest walks by, but passes on the other side of the road. Then a Levite passes by, but again, on the other side of the road. But a Samaritan, on his journey, is on the road, when he sees the man, had "compassion" on him. The Samaritan bound up his wounds, put him on his animal, and took him to an inn to take care of him. The next day, the Samaritan paid the innkeeper to take care of the injured man and says, "Take care of him, and whatever you spend, I will repay when I come back." Jesus then asks the lawyer, "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be the neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" So, who is the neighbor? What does the lawyer say? Who remembers?

Remember, the lawyer wanted to justify himself in loving God and his neighbor as himself. So, we are to show mercy to our neighbor, even if he is a despised Samaritan. Think about the story again. The lawyer answers Jesus' question with, "The one who showed him mercy." Did you get the subtlety? Who is the neighbor of the beaten and bloodied man? The one who showed HIM mercy. Not the one that he has mercy upon. I don't think we are the Good Samaritan. I think we are the ones in the ditch – bloodied and broken.

The lawyer is convinced of his own goodness and is justifying himself. "Show me my neighbor and let me at him! I'll love the tar out of him." But once again, Jesus turns things on its head. Your neighbor is one who has mercy on you who shows you love and compassion when he finds your broken body in a ditch. Jesus says, "Go and do likewise." Realize I am the one in the ditch. I am the one who is dying in sin. I am selfish. I am a liar. I seek out my comfort over the comfort of others.

By extension, God is the Good Samaritan. He finds us and has compassion and mercy. I once heard mercy defined as, "Receiving something even though it is not deserved." God, full of mercy, picks us up out of that ditch and takes care of us! Oh, what wonderful mercy! Knowing that I am in need of mercy makes me appreciate it all the more – that is, I love mercy! Loving mercy, then, helps me to better recognize that others need it too. We get to be like our Father and show mercy to others. What a blessing! Love mercy – Go and do likewise!