

God's Mercy — It Alone Meets Our Need.

Text: Psa 86:3, 5, 1

Suggested Hymns:

305, 462, 314, 325, 380

1) It is Real Mercy

2) It Is Guaranteed Mercy

3) It Is An Experienced Mercy

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is based on the Introit for today, Psalm, 86:3, 5, 1, ³ *Be merciful to me, O Lord, For I cry to You all day long.* ⁵ *For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. ... Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me; For I am poor and needy.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Amidst all the plenty about us in Australia our need is still great! We need the strength to meet our daily tasks. We need the knowledge to face the competition in a competitive world. We need health to enjoy an active lifestyle. We need money to buy what we need for our daily existence. We need friends with whom to share our thoughts, and we need rest and relaxation to ease life's tensions.

But when any of these fail we often feel desperate and alone! So we look for an answer to our problem, but in ourselves we find none.

The materialistic world thinks that money is the answer. If you have enough money, you can buy anything and live securely.

Yet there comes a time when illness strikes and the best doctor has no assuring answer. There may come a time when loss creates anxiety and there seems to be no ready help. There may com a time when tensions mount but there seems to be no relief. And finally when death stares you in the face and all human resources seem to be of no use - what then?

There is only one sure and satisfying answer, as suggested by today's Introit, *God's Mercy — It Alone Meets Our Need*. That is our theme for today. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. It Is Real Mercy

God's mercy — who of us has not heard of it? Almost every Sunday we are reminded of it as, after the confession of sins, God's messenger reassures us, "*Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy on us,*" and then, later on, we join in singing, "*Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.*"

But what is mercy? The Webster dictionary tells us, "*It is kindness in excess of what may be expected; it is the act of treating an offender with less severity than he deserves.*"

What have we deserved? What else but God's wrath and judgment because of the sinfulness of our hearts, the many failures of our lives, and our daily transgressions of God's holy Law. And what can we expect because of such sins of omission and sins of commission but death? For "*the wages of sin is death*" Scripture says.¹ Yes, "*If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,*" if God should begin to count up our many sins against Him, "*O Lord, who could stand?*"² Who, then, would be able to face God in His judgment? No one!

Nobody one can claim immunity here, for "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*"³ "*There is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.*"⁴ How hopeless and helpless we are!

But here comes the reassuring words of Scripture, as we read in Psalm 130:4, "*But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.* Why? What made possible this cancellation of the debt of our sin? It was the holy life of God's Son as the complete fulfilment of the Law. It was the sacrifice of His Son upon the cross as the complete payment for our sins.

And why such a sacrifice? Solely because of God's love for us. Yes, "*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"⁵ No merit could be found in any of us by which we might claim acceptance by God. And so, if God's justice was to be satisfied, mercy had to prevail.

It is this mercy the psalmist pleads, as the Introit begins, “*Be merciful to me.*” And the reason? “*I am poor and needy.*” Certainly not in any physical sense, for David was a man of stature, and also of great wealth.

But read the Psalms, study his life, and you will soon find it filled with intense struggles in his soul because of the sinfulness of his heart, the wickedness of his life, and guilt over sinful acts committed that he tried to hide in the innermost recesses of his soul. Where to find rest, that was David’s deep concern.

But he could not find it in himself, for having broken God’s law, he had no virtue in himself with which he could mend the broken pieces. He could not offer the wealth of his kingdom, for *the LORD of hosts says, “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine.”*⁶ David could not tender the power of his kingship, for this, too, had been given to him by God. And yet there was a glimmer of hope in his heart because of a glorious promise which God had made to his forefathers and repeated to him.

The Messiah would come — a Helper sent from God. He would deliver His people from their sins. He would make payment for their transgressions. He would reconcile all people with God.

To David this was as real as if it had already happened, for to him God’s promises were sure. And so he prays in Psalm 51:1, *Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies.*

To us this mercy is even more real, for we know that what David anticipated actually took place. Scripture says, “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.*”⁷ We know the life and death of Jesus Christ, His sufferings as well as His great sacrifice upon the cross, to be a historic fact.

Let there never be any questions in your heart: Jesus Christ, God’s Son and Mary’s Son, lived and died for you and me, just as really as any of the other great historic people lived, whose names appear on the pages of history.

Yes, “*This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*”⁸ Yes He lived, He died, He was

buried and He rose again, and thereby established our salvation, won for us perfect forgiveness, and so brought us face to face with the mercy of God.

And God has communicated this mercy to us through His Word — the assurance of the complete forgiveness of all our sins through Jesus Christ, His only Son and our Redeemer. Therefore, there should be no doubt in the mind of any of us that we shall also obtain God's mercy, His undeserved help, when faced with all the other needs of life.

Listen to the apostle Paul as he reflects in Romans 8:32, ³² *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* And why shouldn't it be so when we remember that sin is at the bottom of all our troubles, whether sickness, disaster, or even death?

And since Jesus, the very Son of God, was able and did remove the very cause of all our needs, He can then also meet the need itself. Whatever, therefore, your problem, whatever your trial, whatever your burden, whatever your need — here is mercy, plenteous mercy. Our text says, ⁵ *For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive.*" The Lord is ready to help and to relieve you. That is God's promise. It can be depended upon.

2. It Is Guaranteed Mercy

It is a mercy covenanted to us in God's Word. This becomes very apparent as you read the Scriptures and note in them the promise of God's mercy to His people. It runs like a golden thread throughout the Old Testament.

Already in the Garden of Eden God had promised, ¹⁵ *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.*⁹ In other words, through the Seed of the woman, God's promised Son Jesus: Satan, who is the author of all sin and of the problems and needs, the weaknesses and illnesses of life, and even of death itself, would someday be crushed.

To Abraham God said, *and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*¹⁰ Through Moses He assured, ¹⁵ *The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.*¹¹

Of Jesus, Isaiah prophesied, *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*¹² While Micah foretold, *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel.”*¹³ And then there are numerous other prophecies which foretold the ministry of Jesus as well as many details of His sufferings and death.

And God kept these promises. To the letter each one was fulfilled. Never once did God go back on any of them until Jesus could cry out in triumph: *“It is finished.”*

Let us never doubt God’s Word when He further promises us in 1 John 1:7, *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* And ³⁶ *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.”*¹⁴

To be sure, as certain as all of God’s promises concerning the coming Christ were made and kept by Him, so all the other promises concerning Him and His salvation, assuring us of His full mercy in Christ, are guaranteed to us.

Likewise, all His promises to keep us in His loving care in the face of every one of life’s needs are certain. For example in Psalm 34:18, ¹⁸ *The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*

And in Isaiah 43:1-2, *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.*

And in Isaiah 49:15, ¹⁵ *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.*

And there are also promises in the New Testament. We read in Matthew 11:28, ²⁸ *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* And in John 14:1, ¹ *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.* And in Romans 8:28, ²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

And finally in Revelation 3:21, ²¹ ***“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.***

Indeed, God’s love and mercy is a “steadfast love” — a love that surely can be depended upon when all else fails. This was also the conviction of the great apostle Paul when, in today’s Epistle, he writes that God ***“is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”***¹⁵

There was certainly no question in his mind that, even though he was languishing in a prison cell while writing these words, God would see him through, find a way out for him, and if not a way out, then an eventual escape through death, translating him to greater glories in heaven. Never once did he doubt, but he firmly trusted God’s promises. God had covenanted with him — and for him this was enough.

Should it be any different with you and me? Let there never be a question in your mind as to the guarantee of God’s mercy in the face of any and every need. Every promise of God has been secured to us by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and therefore, when He promises ***Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand,***¹⁶ and, ***“Because I live, you will live also,”***¹⁷ yes, you can be sure. It will be so. God has never failed.

3. It Is An Experienced Mercy

Furthermore, this is also the experience of countless children of God — one of whom was pointed out so vividly in the Gospel for today. Luke 7:13, ¹³ ***When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.”***

Is there anyone in a more desperate situation than a widow, losing her only child, and he the main support in her life? What a seemingly hopeless future for her! Hence we don’t blame her for her tears, but share the sympathy of the accompanying crowd.

But what a blessing when Christ appeared at her side and in His marvellous power restored her only son to her again! With Jesus at hand even death had to yield its grasp. Had she in any way deserved such help? No, not in the least.

But in His love, Jesus also demonstrates that His mercy is real, and that He is always near even though His helping hand may not always be apparent, we see Him stepping forward. And what was the widow's experience? God's mercy met her greatest need.

Likewise many a Christian can recount for you experiences in his or her life where God with His mercy has been near; where the ravages of sin had to give way and life was again restored; where illness was transformed into health; where fears were dispelled and a guilt complex removed and a joyful, confident faith again radiated from the heart.

There are many experiences, one after another, where God's mercy and loving-kindness proves to be an effective help in the hour of need, a source of comfort, and a wellspring of great spiritual strength.

Nor will you ever know such mercy until you have learned to know it in Christ, sought it diligently, relied upon it implicitly, and earnestly asked for it.

But how do you obtain it, so that its rich comfort might be yours? Look at David. He learned to know the rich mercy and steadfast love of God through prayer, just as we read in the words of the Apostle James, ***“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”***¹⁸

Read the whole of the 86th Psalm when you get home, and note how with one intercession after another David pleaded with God — ***Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me; ³ Be merciful to me, O Lord, ⁴ Rejoice the soul of Your servant, ⁶ Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; And attend to the voice of my supplications.***

Have you ever pleaded in this way in the hour of your need? And if not, how can you expect to experience the rich mercy of God?

It is just the same as with love. You can say all you like about it, or speak ever so emotionally with regard to it, yet, if you have never experienced love or enjoyed a loving relationship with a friend, or with a devoted lover, or with a cherished spouse, you just do not know love and can't express it.

Likewise, also with God's mercy. Unless you have tasted it, experienced it, cherished it, and prayed for it, you have not known the joy, the comfort, and the peace that it engenders.

Hence, turn all your desires, your needs, your perplexing problems, the burdens that beset you into prayers, always remembering, *“If a care is too small to be made a prayer, it is too small to be made a burden”* Yes, be frank with God as He is frank with you.

Go to His throne in humble child-like prayer, keeping back nothing, repeating with the psalmist as written in the words of our Introit for today, *“³ Be merciful to me, O Lord, For I cry to You all day long. ⁵ For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.*

God’s mercy and His steadfast love will embrace you, and give you peace for your soul. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Romans 6:23

² Psalm 130:3

³ Romans 3:23

⁴ Ecclesiastes 7:20

⁵ Romans 5:8

⁶ Haggai 2:8

⁷ 2 Corinthians 8:9

⁸ 1 Timothy 1:15

⁹ Genesis 3:14

¹⁰ Genesis 28:14

¹¹ Deuteronomy 18:15

¹² Isaiah 7:14

¹³ Micah 5:2

¹⁴ John 3:36

¹⁵ Ephesians 3:20

¹⁶ Isaiah 41:10

¹⁷ John 14:19

¹⁸ James 4:8