

Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, April 14, 2021. Thank you so much for tuning in and for taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

For today's devotion, I would love to take some time to consider God's mercy. We often praise God for being merciful, and call upon God's mercy in situations that we are hardly able to bear. We say the ancient Greek words "Kyrie eleison" in worship, joined with the whole body of Christ across time and space. And I'm especially considering God's mercy in light of the absolutely tragic news of Daunte Wright being killed in the Twin Cities area this past weekend. God, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Spirit, have mercy.

There have been many powerful words written on this topic over the past thousands of years by hundreds of faithful people, and many of them help us to deepen our understanding of what God's mercy really is and how it is experienced in our lives. I certainly don't claim to be any better at defining a characteristic of God than anyone else, and frankly I don't think any of us can perfectly define certain aspects of God, or else it wouldn't be God. The divine mystery is an important part of our faith - that God shows up in ways that surprise us and are mysterious to us, which is a gift, because there is so much in life we can't control, so we put our faith for how things shake out in a God that shows up in ways that are mysterious, life-giving, and other than ourselves. Perhaps an upcoming devotion will discuss the holy mystery of faith.

But here's what I propose: God's mercy is the intersection of compassion, justice, and deliverance. God is merciful to us because God deeply loves us, in our humanness, thanks be to God. These three ideas intersect partially because each of their root words (especially in Latin and Greek) are very deeply connected. But mostly, I think mercy is the action of God, rooted in love, in the midst of the unbearable.

Compassion must be part of mercy because compassion is the bodily sensation of identifying with someone's struggles and feeling a deep call to help. We cannot see the suffering of our fellow humans without feeling something in our bodies that connects to their pain. Even when there's tension about how an event has played out, or is being handled, there is a bodily reaction that we either push away in favor of a heady argument or explanation, or we hurt with those who are hurting. We cannot get around this deep connection of what it is to be human.

We also cannot separate the experiences of our bodies from the experiences of our minds and spirits - they are all deeply connected and make up who we are as humans. This connection of the three parts of being human, mind, body, and spirit, is where deliverance comes in. Deliverance is part of mercy because when we call on God's mercy, we acknowledge that there is suffering of some kind which is unbearable and we ask for God to end.

Justice comes in where we know only God can truly provide judgment. God's justice is rooted in love, it lifts the lowly up high and brings the high down low, God's justice is for the poor and oppressed, the widow and orphan, the one who is on the margins and God will never abandon. God's justice is truly the only perfect judgment, human justice always falls short. So mercy has to be from God's judgment, God's ability to show up and embody our human experience in

Jesus Christ, and God's power to deliver us from the sins of this world. There is so much sin and brokenness in this world, O God, and we call upon you to be merciful, to show us your love, your light, your peace, and deliver us, so your kingdom may be brought near.

Friends, take some time to meditate on, consider, and pray for God's mercy. When we call upon God for mercy, what comes up for us? What are we really praying for, crying out for? Who is in need of justice or compassion? What do we need deliverance from? And how is God showing up in this moment, this time, this place, this prayer?

Breathe deep, dear friends, and bless you in your prayers, in your meditations, in your calls for God's mercy to deliver us and bring the kingdom of heaven even nearer.

Our scripture for today is two short messages that speak beautifully to God's mercy. I invite you to consider these scriptures in the midst of your meditations and prayers.

The first is the famous verse, recounted in Psalm 145:8-9:, that states the heart of who God is: *"The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made."*

And the second comes from Jesus, in Luke 6:20-21;35a-36:

Then Jesus looked up at his disciples and said:

*"Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*"Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.*

*"Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh."*

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High... Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

The Word of the Lord.

Let us pray.

Lord God, creator of the universe, have mercy on us. Have mercy on us in our pain, in our hardships, in the ways we are doing our best to navigate the sin and brokenness in this world. You journey with us in the midst of this pain, and for your holy presence, we give you thanks. Help us to be compassionate with one another, to lean on your justice, and deliver us from the struggles of life here on earth. We pray for your kingdom come, O Lord, now and always. Help us to see glimpses of the hope and new life made possible through your Son Jesus. It is in His name and united with the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Go in peace, dear friends, have a blessed day. Amen.