

*Redeemer Presbyterian Church*  
**“Ministries of Mercy- The Call of the Jericho Road”**  
(A study of the book by Timothy J. Keller, P&R Publishing, 1997.)

**Session VI.**  
**CHURCH AND WORLD: A BALANCED FOCUS**

*But a Samaritan... (Luke 10:33)*

***“As a priority, we should give to needy Christians both intensively and extensively, until their need is gone. But we must also give generously to nonbelievers as part of our witness to the world” (Keller, p. 80)***

Purpose of the parable of the Good Samaritan: to answer the law expert’s question, “*Who is my neighbor?*” Luke tells us that the man was seeking to justify himself.

Two main characters in the parable were a Jew and a Samaritan- bitter enemies- yet the Samaritan gave aid. Jesus’ teaching here clearly demolishes any limitations put on mercy. We are to love *anyone* we find on the road.

Question: Does this mean that Christians are not to discriminate between Christians and non-Christians when giving aid?

## **I. The Priority of Covenant**

- Most biblical admonitions to help the poor refer to poor Christians. The church is a model of the kingdom. “There should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today.” (Deut. 15:4,5)
- Thus, the ministry of mercy was primarily a covenantal blessing

### **A. The Family and Church**

- The family- the closest covenantal connection we have- has the greatest responsibility for a needy person (1 Tim. 5:8)
- The people of God (the Church) are repeatedly told to care for their needy members.
- The poor in the church were helped by money given as tithes.
- Although Old Testament social legislation included mercy to strangers, laws for giving favored fellow Israelites. (Deut.23:20; Deut. 15:3)
- The New Testament church placed a high priority on helping the poor within their covenant community. (Matt. 25:35ff., 1 John 3:17, James 2:15-17)

## **B. The State**

- The citizen has a covenantal relationship to his government
- God held pagan kings responsible for caring for the poor and weak
- Joseph became a high-ranking civil magistrate in a pagan state and administrated a hunger relief program to his nation and to surrounding ones

## **II. Mercy to the Outsider**

*“The ministry of mercy is not only an expression of the fellowship of the church, but also an expression of the mission of the church.”* (Keller, p. 83, paraphrasing the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:10.)

### **A. Neighbors**

- Luke 10:25-37 teaches us that *anyone* is our neighbor
- Not all men are our brothers but every man is our neighbor

### **B. Strangers**

- the “stranger” was a non-Jew who lived in Israel
- the stranger was required to observe basic religious laws of Israel
- He lacked the sign of the covenant (circumcision) yet he was a recipient of mercy
- The New Testament *assumes* Old Testament rules on charity (Matt. 25:35,43; Heb. 13:2; I Tim 5:10)

### **C. Enemies**

- In common grace, God bestows blessings on all people. “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Matt. 5:45)
- This is a pattern for our deed ministry.
- It’s not a big deal to love those who love us.

### **D. God’s Mercy and Ours**

- God’s mercy came to us when we were unworthy and his enemies
- Rom. 3:9-18
- We are commanded to “abound in love...toward all men.” (I Thess. 3:12)

### **E. The Deed Ministry of Christ**

- Jesus was mighty in “word and deed” (Luke 24:19)
- He did not confine his ministry of miracles to believers only
- Sin has corrupted all aspects of life- the kingdom of God is the renewal of these areas under the power of God

### III. Mercy: A Sign of the Kingdom

*A. Our deeds of mercy point forward to the promise of a new heaven and a new earth, and they also show that the promise of the kingdom is already being fulfilled in the pouring out of the love of Christ through the Spirit.* (Keller, p. 86)

Consider the feeding of the four thousand. (Matt. 15:32) There's no mention of Jesus feeding them to prove his identity- he merely fed them because of his compassion. Our ministry of mercy must have the same motivation. It cannot merely be a way to validate our preaching.

#### *For further reflection and study:*

1. How does the ministry of mercy reflect the Kingdom of God?
2. Who are the "Samaritans" in your life?? Do you know them?
3. What are some of the ways that Christ showed mercy to unbelievers during his earthly ministry?

Note: All of these study notes are drawn from *Ministries of Mercy- The Call of the Jericho Road*, written by Timothy J. Keller. P&R Publishing, Second edition 1997. ( available on Amazon.com; also on cvbbs.com , the Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service)