

b) The elders won't figure it out.

Gospel Witness: Gospel Mercy

Jerry Cisar — January 22, 2023

Text: Galatians 2:9-10

Introduction

What is *mercy*? From the Latin, *miser cordia*, according to its original literal sense, means to have one's heart (*cor*) with the poor (*miseri*).

I. Gospel Priority of the Poor

A. Care for the poor has always been an essential of Gospel witness.

i. Paul mentions one non-negotiable: *remember the poor*.

ii. "Remember" does not mean to simply *call them to mind*.

iii. Remembering the poor means to act on their behalf.

a) Why is this an essential for Gospel witness?

b) Paul himself demonstrates this priority of the poor in Gospel ministry.

B. Jesus placed a priority on the poor.

i. In Matthew's Gospel we see this in at least three ways:

a) The very first Gospel preaching of Jesus speaks highlights mercy to the needy. Just a few highlights:

➤ Matt. 5:3-10

➤ Matt. 5:42

➤ Matt. 6:19-21

b) "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." (Matt. 9:13; 12:7)

B. Some ways we are currently engaged in mercy as a church.

LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- In Galatians 2, what are some of the practices carried over from the Law that Paul was more than willing to make unnecessary? What is the one thing he mentions which remained a non-negotiable?
- In what ways did Jesus place a priority on the poor? The rest of the NT? Does any of these strike you as unusual or surprising?
- When we show mercy to those in need because of Christ, how is it not just a means to an end, but a part of the end (kingdom) itself?
- Discuss the Mary Jo Copeland quote (top of previous page). How are we doing on *getting in the water*?
- How might Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding the rich reveal a dramatic shift in how we think about the church today?
- Why do we need both engineers and scientists (as Hamming describes it) in the church?
- How is the church structure a bit like Uber or Airbnb? Is that imagery helpful for you? Explain.

c) Matthew 25:31-46

ii. In Luke, we see this in two ways:

a) Jesus places the priority of the poor in His inaugural message (Luke 4:18-19)

b) The Sermon on the Plain, which describes the year of the Lord's favor... of release from debt. (Luke 6:34-36)

C. The book of Acts places care for the poor as a central priority.

i. Acts 4:32-34

ii. Acts 5

iii. Acts 6

D. James reflects this missional priority on the poor. (James 1:27)

iii. The early church pictured the reign of Christ through mercy.

Tertullian insisted that God had a "peculiar respect" for the lowly, and that caring for the poor was the "distinctive sign" of believers.

Julian the Apostate concerning Christians: "(they) feed not only their poor, but ours."

Calvin repeatedly asserted that regardless of faith or merit, all human beings are bound together in "the common society of the human race," and that the image of God *alone* makes one "worthy of giving yourself and all your possessions."

B. Paul gives Timothy instructions for Gospel mercy.

i. 1 Tim. 6:17-19

ii. Calvin said that humans need to be deprived of the illusion that giving to the poor is a foolish waste of resources.

II. Gospel Mercy Pictured

A. The Church is called to be a picture of Christ's Reign.

i. Kavin Rowe: the church is to "bear witness to the inbreaking reign of God that Jesus announces and embodies, in all that we do and are." We become "a picture of and testament to God's reign."

ii. Good news to the poor is embodied in acts of mercy.

III. Gospel Mercy Practiced

A. What does this mean for Gulf Coast Community Church?

Mary Jo Copeland: "When someone is drowning, you do more than throw a life preserver. You get into the water."

Eugene Cho: "Ideas, dreams, and visions don't change the world. Rather, it's people—like you and me, who faithfully, prayerfully, and tenaciously live out these ideas, dreams, and visions—who change the world."

i. How do we contextualize mercy to the poor in our context?

ii. Gospel mercy needs strengthening.

a) We need nuanced and creative ways.