

**Joke:** A group of men are changing in locker room at a golf club. Suddenly a cell phone on the bench starts to ring, a man puts it on speaker phone as he continues getting dressed. He says "Hello?", the woman on the other line says "Honey, it's me. Are you still at the golf club?"

"Yeah, what's going on?"

"I'm out shopping and found this great new leather coat, and it's only \$500 dollars, can I get it?"

"Sure, if you like it"

"Thank you! I was also at the dealership earlier and saw the new Mercedes models, and there is one that's absolutely gorgeous, and I really would like to get it!"

"How much is it?"

"About \$80,000..."

"Alright, but for that price I want all the extra options included."

"Great! One more thing. The house we wanted last year is back on the market, but they're asking 1,500,000."

"Well, go ahead and make them an offer, but don't go above 1,200,000."

"Really? Okay! I love you, see you later!"

"Love you too."

The rest of the men in the club stared at him wide eyed. Astonished that he would agree to all that his wife had told him.

As he hangs up the phone he looks at the men and asks "Anyone know whose phone this is?"

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We just finished a series last week looking at some of the I AM statements that Jesus made that revealed his nature. Today we are starting a new series that will deal with some of the characteristics of God. I'm calling this series God is and today I want to start by talking to those of you who are hurting.

Maybe you're a little bit afraid, or feel like you're all alone. You might feel exhausted or worn out. Maybe you feel like you're losing hope.

I'm going to show you a guy from the Old Testament, his name is Jeremiah, and his words are recorded in the book of Lamentations.

And if you feel worn out, if you feel discouraged, you need to know your not the first one to ever feel that way. Jeremiah felt a lot like that as well.

Let me paraphrase what Jeremiah tells us. I will get to the actual Scripture, I promise, but let me just say it how many of us would probably say it today.

Jeremiah said, "People suck."

He said, "Life isn't fair." "My body is wrecked." "I can't sleep, I'm broke, I don't know how I'm going to pay the bills. I'm overwhelmed with anxiety and God doesn't seem to care."

That's what he said. its a bit more spiritual in Lamentations, but that's essentially what he said.

And then in Lamentations 3:19, he said. . .

Lamentations 3:19–21 (NLT): The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. 20 I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. 21 Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:

Today my prayer is that this message will help you call to mind one of the beautiful and powerful attributes of God that will give you hope when you're hurting.

He said, I still dare to hope when I remember this:

What is it that he remembers. . .let's look at it a moment

Lamentations 3:22–23 (NLT): The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. 23 Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.

I mentioned this series will deal with some of the characteristics of God and today we are going to see that God is merciful.

So, let me give you three of the attributes or qualities of God that are closely related, yet very different in their function.

We're going to look at three that will help us build our foundation.

They are justice, grace, and mercy.

They're related, yet very distinct. What is justice?

Justice is simply defined, whenever you get what you deserve.

And in our culture today, when someone does something horrible, we tend to think, "Let justice be served,"

That's justice, somebody gets what they deserve.

Grace is when you get what you don't deserve. Do any of us deserve salvation? No, we don't deserve it. Let me share with you again a Scripture I shared last week that deals with that.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NIV): For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

You're not good enough, smart enough, can't do enough—it's grace. God gives us something that we do not deserve.

But grace is different from mercy. Mercy is when you don't get what you do deserve. Each one grace and mercy are just a little bit different.

Grace is when you get what you don't deserve, mercy is when you don't get what you do deserve.

And let's be honest, most of us like justice. . .until it comes down to us.

We don't want justice for us, what do we want? We want mercy.

We don't want what we deserve, oh we want other people to get justice, but we want mercy.

Let me try to explain it this way, how many of you have ever received a ticket for driving too fast?

Ok so you go to court plead your case and the judge says dismissed. That's mercy. You didn't get what you do deserved.

When you were wrong and deserved punishment, the fine for speeding, you didn't get the punishment. And we want justice for other people, especially when it is something we think is one of those big things, but we tend to want mercy for ourselves.

And God, this is good news, is a merciful God.

Let me show you a text in Ephesians 2. . .

Paul let's us in our spiritual condition without Christ, our nature without Christ. And he contrasts that with God's mercy. And he says in Ephesians 2 verses 1 - 3

Ephesians 2:1–3 (TPT): And his fullness fills you, even though you were once like corpses, dead in your sins and offenses. 2 It wasn't that long ago that you lived in the religion, customs, and values of this world, obeying the dark ruler of the earthly realm who fills the atmosphere with his authority, and works diligently in the hearts of those who are disobedient to the truth of God. 3 The corruption that was in us from birth was expressed through the deeds and desires of our self-life. We lived by whatever natural cravings and thoughts our minds dictated, living as rebellious children subject to God's wrath like everyone else.

In other words, he's saying without Christ, you are spiritually dead. Not physically dead, spiritually dead, because of your disobedience to God. You're obeying the devil without Christ. And you're following your sinful desires and you're subject to and deserve God's anger and wrath.

And then in verse four, you see two of the best words in all of the Bible. Remember, what are we without Christ? We're dead in our sins. We're obeying the devil. We are subject to God's anger.

And then Paul says. . .

But God. . .say that with me. Once more. . .but God

Ephesians 2:4 (TPT): But God still loved us with such great love. He is so rich in compassion and mercy.

Rich in what? Compassion and mercy.

Then in verse 5. . .

Ephesians 2:5 (TPT): Even when we were dead and doomed in our many sins, he united us into the very life of Christ and saved us by his wonderful grace!

In other words, even though we deserve to be punished, because of God's rich mercy and compassion, he didn't give us what we deserve.

And if you have ever been tempted to think, "Well, God's not fair." You need to "Thank God he's not fair."

Because if he was fair, I would, you would get what our sins deserve. But God is rich in mercy.

The Greek word is *éleos* and that word is a present tense word.

What that means is that God lives in a continual, ongoing state of mercy.

In other words, it's always been there and it always will be there. God changes not.

And that's why it's new every morning. It was there yesterday. It was new today. It'll be new tomorrow because it does not end.

Maybe your thinking, "But, that's so different from the angry God in the Old Testament who would strike people dead?"

And now he's like the loving, wink at sin, push over God in the New Testament.

But church, that's not it at all. He's always been just, and he's always been merciful. He's always been righteous and he's always been loving.

And here's the problem, that thought right there is why so many people have a wrong view of God. It's where so many people have been so wrong.

And here this church if your perception of God is off you will not have the right perspective God has planned for you.

So many people, they don't understand God because their view of God starts in Genesis 3, and it ends in Revelation 20.

If you don't know Genesis 3, that's when Adam and Eve fell.

That's when they sinned. That's when they disobeyed God. And Revelation 20 talks about the punishment. That's the judgment.

And so, for so many people, when they think about God, their theology is, you're a sinner and you're going to hell. You're pathetic and you're going to hell. You fell short and you're going to hell. You're not a good person, you're going to hell.

But that's not where the story of God started. And that's not where the story of God ends. The beginning is in Genesis 1. And in Genesis 1, God created everything and said, "It's good. It's all good. The oceans are good. The mountains are good. The skies

are good. The birds are good. The fish are good. The grapes are good. It's all good."

Then he created people. And he didn't say people were good, as a matter of fact he said, "man was very good."

This is where it started. It started with the goodness of God. And he said, "This is so good, enjoy it all. Be naked. Multiply. Have fun. Party in the garden. Just don't eat the fruit of this one tree.

And then Adam and Eve gave in to temptation and ate the one fruit God said don't eat. God said, "If you eat of that, you'll surely die." They ate it and did they die a physical death? No, they died a spiritual death.

And what did God do? Because he's a mean judgmental, angry God. He struck 'em dead on the spot and made little black spots right there by his first blade of grass. And started all over.

No, that's not what he did.

He said, "Hey listen there are consequences for what you did. I've got bad news for you, child birth, child bearing's going to be hard, and Adam hi ho, hi ho it's off to work you go."

(Do the school days version)

God said, that's what's coming.

There's some consequences. But then what did God do? In his mercy, which is new every morning, that has been there from the beginning and will be there till the end, in his mercy, he sacrificed an innocent animal, and made coverings with the skin for their shame. And from the foundation of the world had a plan to set captives free and save us by sending Jesus to become that

sacrificial lamb and hang on a cross so that we can become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

His mercy is new every morning.

It was there at the very beginning. It starts with his mercy and his goodness, and it goes all the way to the end in Revelation 21 and 22, when we see that God makes all things new again.

It starts with good, it ends with good, because his mercy is new every morning.

When you understand the nature of God, yes, he's always just, but he's always merciful as well.

And your only reasonable response in view of God's mercy, should be that we offer our lives as living sacrifices.

He's always been good, he always will be good.

In the Old Testament, David sinned. Not the Bathsheba thing on the roof, this is a different time. David actually had a few more struggles with sin.

Thankfully, God is a God of mercy.

This was a sin that could have had some pretty big consequences to a lot of people in the Old Testament.

And I want you to watch what David did, he wanted to turn to God, but I want you to watch who he didn't want to turn to when he had done wrong.

He says this in 2 Samuel 24,

2 Samuel 24:14 (NIV): David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into human hands."

David said, I would rather go to a merciful God, because God may show mercy, but so many people won't. So many would enact the punishment I deserve.

But God just may be a merciful God to me, but, oh if you mess up, people will pile it on.

And the tragedy is that, so often, those who should be most merciful, we the body of Christ, are often those who actually show the least amount of mercy.

We're going to come back to this thought because it's really, really important.

But what I want to do first is I want to show you just how much mercy means to God. Just how much it matters to God.

In fact, if you look in the Old Testament, there is the most meticulous, detailed descriptions of how God wanted his holy temple built.

In case you don't know, the temple would be his dwelling place, and you can read about all the details, this is how you build a portico and here's the entry, and here's the store room, and here's the upper part, and here's the dimensions. It can be this much and this much by this much, this long, and here's the cubits, and here's the gold, and here's the silver, here's the bronze, and you do and build this and that with each.

And then God says, "In the middle of my house, I want you to build a place of atonement. In the very middle of all the

descriptive glory and beauty of my house, I want you to build a mercy seat." Why?

Because God was saying, "In my house, I want you to always make room for mercy."

It's in the center of my house, it's in the center of my heart. It's the core of who I am.

Because with the birth of every new day, my mercy is already there. My mercy is new every morning.

James said that mercy triumphs over judgment.

So, why is it that those people, those Christians, who should be full of the most mercy because we received the most mercy. Why is it that those who receive the most mercy are often the most judgmental?

Perhaps one of the biggest reasons why so many people stay away from God today, is not because of who God is, but because how we have represented Him.

It's narrow-minded, hypocritical, judgmental Christians without mercy. And that's why, because we are people who have received mercy, we should be the most merciful.

What is our message? It's the message of Jesus. It's the message that Jesus is knocking on the door. And if anyone opens up, Jesus comes in.

In other words, our message is come as you are. Come with your pain. Come with your brokenness. Come with your sinfulness. Come with your insecurities. Come with your dysfunctions. Come with your drug problem. Come with your porn addiction. Come

with your lying. Come with your envy. Come with your anger.  
Come with your guilt, shame and regrets.

Come with the things that you don't want anybody to know about.  
The things you were trying to keep in the darkness.

Just come to Jesus.

I'm not here to judge. I've received mercy. And I want you to  
have the same mercy. It doesn't mean that we won't tell the truth,  
or preach against sin.

Hear this church, I will not compromise to the culture because  
God still wants and is coming back for a church without spot or  
wrinkle, but I the same time we're not going to judge you away.

I will affirm the person not the lifestyle if it goes against the Word  
of God.

Come just as you are. Come with your doubts, addictions,  
problems.

Just come. Jesus wants to change your heart and when the  
heart changes your life transforms to be more like Him.

There's so many people that have a question about God. They  
doubt. And the church says you can't doubt, and so they leave  
the church, like, this should be the safest place in the world to  
take your doubts to God. This should be the place we're most  
secure with the most complicated questions about God. You  
think God hasn't heard it before?

Come with your questions. Come with your complaints. Come  
with the things that make you crazy about the church. You think  
there's a lot of things you don't like?

Listen, I'm the pastor and I've been on this journey as a follower of Jesus for over 40 years. I can give you a longer list of things I don't like. You're not perfect. I'm not perfect. We'll never be perfect. We're far from perfect.

And let me pause here because I've heard people say that we are made perfect in Christ Jesus. And that is true in a sense because of what Christ did on the cross we are made complete, whole. You're made perfect by the blood, but not in some of what we do. That's why we need to keep repentance close. So that when we miss the mark and not act like God created us to act we can go boldly to the throne of grace and His mercy which is new every morning brings us back in right relationship with God.

So, because we're not perfect, we don't demand perfection. We have been forgiven, we are people of grace. And so, my message is a me too message. You need forgiveness, me too. You need help, me too. You have problems. Me too. You struggle with some things. Me too.

Let's just go to Jesus. He is good. Let's let him straighten us out because I can't straighten you out and you can't straighten me out. Make room for mercy.

God says, in the middle of my house, make room for mercy.

If there's anything in the middle it's room for mercy, make room for mercy in the church, make room for mercy in your heart.

Some of you, you need to receive the mercy of God. He's given it to you, it's now time to receive it. Accept it. You're forgiven. You're changed. You are new.

That thing that you hate about yourself, that you can't let go of. Why are you holding onto something that God has already forgiven? Stop looking back to what God has already forgotten.

Do you realize that when we go to Him and are truly repentant, and what that word means is to turn in the opposite direction make a 180 degree turn around, when we do that God chooses, he doesn't get a case of amnesia, He chooses to simply forget that your misstep, that sin ever took place. That's grace, that's mercy.

Make room for mercy.

Look at the person next to you and say, make room for mercy.

There's a difference between justice, grace, and mercy. What is justice? Justice is very clear. It's when you get what you deserve. And then there's grace. Grace is when you get what you don't deserve. Nobody here deserves salvation. Nobody here can earn it. You're saved by grace. Grace is when you get what you don't deserve, and mercy is when you don't get what you do deserve.

Thank God that I do not get what my sins deserve. Thank God that in his mercy, God sent Jesus. And what makes it even more emotional is when someone sins, someone must die. God is just, but he's also merciful. So, because of my sin, someone had to pay the price.

That someone was the Son of God, Jesus, who paid it for me in my place. The one who never sinned paid it for me. My ticket, wasn't just forgiven, but someone paid for my wrongdoing, for my sinfulness.

Our only reasonable response, the author says this. . .

Romans 12:1 (TPT): Beloved friends, what should be our proper response to God's marvelous mercies? I encourage you to surrender yourselves to God to be his sacred, living sacrifices. And live in holiness, experiencing all that delights his heart. For this becomes your genuine expression of worship.

That's what we do, living for Jesus is worship. Worship is not just singing a song.

I worship Him with the way that I live. Thank God for his mercy. Some of you right now might be saying, "Well, I thank God for his mercy, but I'm still hurting."

I know there's so much pain going on right now.

Let me go back to what Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3, he said this, he said, "The faithful love of the Lord, it never ends." His mercies never cease.

Psalms 23:6 (KJV): Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever .

They were there in Genesis 1, and they're in the end of Revelation. He's always been a God of mercy and He'll always be merciful God.

And then the author says, "Great is his faithfulness, his mercies begin afresh each morning."

Whatever it is that you need from God, his arms are open wide. He starts with mercy. He was merciful yesterday, he's merciful today, he'll be merciful tomorrow. Whatever you need, his grace starts anew today. His goodness starts anew today. His compassion starts anew today. His love for you, it never ends.

Whatever you need from God, he is good. He's always been good. He loves you. He is a God of compassion.

And so, when you are downcast and when you are hurting, just like the prophet, you call this to mind and therefore you have hope.

This is who my God is. This is what he's done. He's always been good. He's always been loving. He's always been faithful. He did for me, what I couldn't do for myself. When I am alone, he is with me. He will never leave me. He will never forsake me. He is the God who comforts me in my trials. He is the God who strengthens me when I'm broken. He is the God who heals me when I'm sick. And yes corrects me when I've strayed.

Where can I go from His spirit? He is always there. If I wake up, he's there. When I go to sleep, he's there. He was with me last night. He'll be with me this morning because his mercies never cease. They are new every morning.

So if you find yourself hurting today, the good news is His mercies are new every single morning.

And it's available for you today. Wherever you're hurting, wherever you're afraid, take it to God. He can handle your doubts. He can handle your fears. He can handle your brokenness. He can handle your anxiety. He can handle your pain. He can handle whatever the situation is. Why?

Because His mercies are new every morning.