

Sunday 09-Jan-22

Blessed are the Merciful

Psalm 41:1-13

Psalm 41

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

- ¹ Blessed are those who have regard for the weak;
the LORD delivers them in times of trouble.
- ² The LORD protects and preserves them—
they are counted among the blessed in the land—
he does not give them over to the desire of their foes.
- ³ The LORD sustains them on their sickbed
and restores them from their bed of illness.
- ⁴ I said, "Have mercy on me, LORD;
heal me, for I have sinned against you."
- ⁵ My enemies say of me in malice,
"When will he die and his name perish?"
- ⁶ When one of them comes to see me,
he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander;
then he goes out and spreads it around.
- ⁷ All my enemies whisper together against me;
they imagine the worst for me, saying,
- ⁸ "A vile disease has afflicted him;
he will never get up from the place where he lies."
- ⁹ Even my close friend,
someone I trusted,
one who shared my bread,
has turned against me.
- ¹⁰ But may you have mercy on me, LORD;
raise me up, that I may repay them.
- ¹¹ I know that you are pleased with me,
for my enemy does not triumph over me.

¹² Because of my integrity you uphold me
and set me in your presence forever.

¹³ Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.

Amen and Amen.

John 13:18-30

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

¹⁸ "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfil this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned against me.'

¹⁹ "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

²¹ After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."

²² His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."

²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So, Jesus told him, **“What you are about to do, do quickly.”** ²⁸ But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

Sermon: Blessed are the merciful

Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Psalm 41** –we'll be focusing on the Psalm and we'll **also see how it relates to** our **NT reading** from **John 13**.

Let me pray for God's guidance and understanding

Let's pray...

Intro/Context

- There's a **story** of a man who had an arch enemy who **hated him** and **wanted him dead**
- The man had an **opportunity to kill his arch enemy** when his arch enemy went into a cave to relieve himself and the man could have come up behind him and taken his life (1 Sam 24)
- But the man didn't take the **opportunity**
- A while later the man had a **second opportunity to kill his arch enemy** whilst his arch enemy was asleep camping in the countryside (1 Sam 26)
- But again – the man didn't take the **opportunity**
- If this **story sounds familiar** – it's because it's in the Bible
- **David** is the man – **King Saul** is the arch enemy – David could have taken out King Saul twice – and it would have been **understandable** and even perhaps **justifiable**
- Why didn't David take the opportunity to wipe out Saul?
- Because the David's arch enemy, **Saul**, was the **King of the land** and **David** had **respect for the King** – knowing **God was in control** of the **rise and fall of the King of the land** – and knowing that it is up to **God to take revenge and repay** (Deut 32:35; Romans 12:19)
- Instead, David - showed mercy

- What is **mercy** anyway?

[PowerPoint 1-Mercy definition]

- **Definition** - *Compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.*

- I came across this **story** which might help to **illustrate** the idea of **mercy**

- From **evangelist Luis Palau**

A mother once approached Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte [1769-1821] seeking a pardon for her son.

The emperor replied that her son had committed a certain offense twice - and justice demanded that her son must die!

"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy."

"But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied.

"Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."

"Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son. [Luis Palau, Experiencing God's Forgiveness, Multnomah Press, 1984.]

(pause)

- **Mercy** is not earned and not deserved – that's why it is **mercy** –

[PowerPoint 2-Heading Psalm 41]

- **It sounds like Grace to me** - and in our Psalm this morning – where the word **mercy** is used – it can **also be translated as grace** – **God's undeserved favour**
- As we look at our Psalm this morning from Psalm 41
- We see first - a general principle – **God blesses those who show mercy** – that's in verses 1 to 3...

[PowerPoint 2a-God blesses those who show mercy]

1. God Blesses those who show mercy (vv1-3)

- See V1 - *God will bless those who have regard for the weak*
- By **weak** here – it means someone who **lacks worldly resources** – someone who lacks food, shelter, money – but it can also include someone **who has a disadvantage** – like King Saul had – unaware of **David's presence**
- The Bible has a **general principle** - for God's people - **to be merciful to foreigners** and **to be merciful to** the **poor** and the **needy** (Ex 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:10, 33; Dt 10:18; Prov 14:21; 19:17)
- So here in v1 – there is a principle that by people being merciful - **they are blessed by God** – and blessed means – **having God's approval and receiving God's favour** – **or some sort of reward** [being blessed is not the motivation for being merciful – it's just the reward that comes from having a heart for others]
- Still in v1 - God promises – **He will deliver those who are merciful in their times of trouble**
- V2 - God promises – to **protect and preserve** those who show mercy to others
- God does this – still in v2 – by counting – those who show mercy - as being blessed in the Land of Israel – and not giving them over to their enemies
- V3 – God even sustains – those who show mercy – on their sickbed and restores them from illness
- David can say this – because he's **speaking from his own experience** – **God has looked after [blessed] David** – because **David showed mercy to others**
- But as we'll see – the Psalm is not just about David though
- Doesn't **Jesus say the same thing** – in one of the beatitudes [*beatitude – is an attitude we have that brings a blessing from God*] in His Sermon on the Mount – in Matthew 5:7 – Jesus says - *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

(pause)

- Now - it seems that **David** himself is **sick** – see v4 – **David asks God for mercy and healing** -see v4

2. God is merciful on the sickness of sin (v4)

- But notice **David confesses** his **sins** before God – end of v4
- He sees that **he is perhaps sick** - because of his **own sin** (perhaps his sin with Bathsheba and his sin against Uriah - 2 Samuel 11:6-17) – and **David confesses his sin and asks God to have mercy upon him** (even though he doesn't deserve it) and to **heal him of sickness and heal his soul of his sin**
- We shouldn't see that **being sick** is always because of **our sin**
- Bad things happen to good people - and bad things happen to bad people alike – that is all **part of living in a broken and cursed world** – since Adam and Eve's rebellion against God in the Garden – which **brought sin and death into the world** – and **brought a broken relationship with God** and brought in a broken creation
- However, we can see our sin as a sickness - that we need healing from
- It's a reminder to us – **to be examining our hearts for unrepented sin** – whether we are sick or well

[PowerPoint 2b-God is merciful on sin]

- The **second point is - *God is merciful on the sickness of sin***
- How so?
- Well – in His grace and mercy – which was **undeserved** – **God sent His Son to heal our sickness of sin** – **by His death on the Cross** – and made us well again – **praise God!**

- Next David - the merciful one - is mistreated whilst he is sick – that's in **verses 5 to 9**

[PowerPoint 2c-merciful one is mistreated]

3. The merciful one is mistreated (vv5-9)

- See V5 - whilst David is on his sickbed – it's like he's **enemies** are **taking bets** on **when he will die**
- There was a time in David's life - when his own **son, Absalom, attempted to take the throne from his father, David, and many of David's enemies were **hoping David would die** and **Absalom would be king****
- Then in V6 –**David's enemies** also come and **tell lies about him** and slander him and **spread that slander about him**
- Again - we should be reminded of another beatitude that **Jesus said** on the **Sermon on the Mount** in **Matt 5:11** – *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.*
- Back to David and in verses 7 & 8– His **enemies imagine the worse for him** – that is – they **wish he would die from some vile disease** – that's horrible, isn't it?
- Then V9 – There's even betrayal - a **close friend** who David trusts - someone who shares bread (a meal) with him - **turns against him**. In **Hebrew** it **literally** means *"lifted up his heel"* against him – that's how Jews describe someone who "is **very unkind**" – it's like they've been **"kicked"** by their friend!
- At this point – we should see clearly this Psalm is not just about King David – but about descendant of King David – **King Jesus**
- You see V9 - *Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.*

- Has a fulfilment in our NT passage from John 13 - where Jesus shares His last meal with His disciples (His close friends) and he tells them before the meal that **He will be betrayed by one of them – and He quotes Psalm 41 verse 9 – if we look at...**
- John 13:18 –Jesus’ says *“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned against me.’*
- Jesus is of course referring to one of His disciples – Judas – who shared bread with Jesus – and then betrayed Him
- We should also see that: the malice, hatred, lies and slander that David cops here in this Psalm – are the same as what happened to Jesus at his trial – people wished Jesus dead and lied and slandered him – and He did die – He was crucified - whereas David was spared.
- **Jesus suffered our punishment and our death – so we could go free from punishment**
- The **ultimate merciful one - is mistreated – so that we receive mercy!** [repeat]

4. The merciful one can be confident God will them show mercy and raise them up (vv10-12)

- Back to David and Psalm 41...

[PowerPoint 2d-merciful one will have mercy and be raised]

- Because David knows God’s character – He can be confident - that God will show him mercy and raise him up– that’s in vv10-12
- So, in V10 - **David asks God to have mercy on Him and raise him up**
- David wants to be raised up - to repay his enemies –
- It seems a bit wrong for David to ask God to raise him up - to repay his enemies

- But as King –David has sovereign rule of the nation and has the right to repay those who go against the ruler of the land
- In comparison – King Jesus - doesn't want to repay His enemies– He says from that cruel cross as He is crucified *“Father forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:24)
- The idea of “raise up” here in v10 – should also give us a hint of resurrection
- You see –
 - Jesus – the merciful one – who had mercy on everyone – who performed miracle upon miracle – who helped the poor – and who loved the outcasts - who **showed mercy by His death on the cross – mercy on sin – offering people the mercy of forgiveness of their sins**
 - Jesus – the merciful one – is Himself – is shown mercy by the Father and raised to back to life –
 - But He's not raised back to life - so He can repay his enemies though – but so that - all who care to belief in Him – can - not only have their sins forgiven – but also have eternal life
- Then in V11 – **David has confidence that God is pleased with him – because David has confessed his sins and because he has been merciful – and so David can see his enemies have not triumphed over him**
- In far greater way – God the Father is well pleased with Jesus, His Son (Matthew 3:17) because Jesus always does the father's will (John 6:38) – and despite what Jesus' arch enemy Satan thinks - Jesus has triumphed over Satan's two weapons– sin and death – Jesus has conquered them both

- And so V12 – **David has confidence of being in God’s presence forever** – eternal life
- For us – we can have that same confidence as David - **of living in God’s presence forever** –It is **only possible** for us - because of Jesus’ death and resurrection
- SO as much as this psalm is of David – it’s also very much of Jesus! And because of Jesus – **the Psalm is for us too!**

Our Response to Jesus’ Mercy

[PowerPoint 3-Response]

- How can we respond to Jesus’ mercy to us – this morning?

[PowerPoint 3a-Be Merciful]

- First, -Like David – and like Jesus – **WE** can - **Be MERCIFUL** - Remember Matt 5:7 – **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.**
- That means us - helping the **poor** and helping the **needy** and helping the **disadvantaged**.
- Shouldn’t we have mercy on others – just as Jesus had on us? (Matthew 18:33)
- Isn’t that what the Apostle Paul is saying in Romans 12:1 - *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*
- What does **offering our bodies as a living sacrifice** look like?
 - It looks like - **not conforming to the world** (Romans 12:2)
 - It looks like - **humble service** (Romans 12:3-8)
 - And it looks like - **putting love in action** – **showing the love of Jesus** (Romans 12:9-21)

- **A challenge then for us this morning:** Is there someone we're not showing mercy to? Remember mercy is undeserved – so we can't use the excuse – they don't deserve it? By showing mercy to someone – we're modelling Jesus to them – and it **may lead them into a relationship with Jesus** (or into a closer relationship with Jesus)

(pause)

[PowerPoint 3b-Be prepared to suffer for righteousness' sake]

- Second, like David – like Jesus – **WE MAY HAVE TO SUFFER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE** - remember Matt 5:10-12 - *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
- We may be persecuted and abused for following Jesus - but **can we join Jesus and say to our enemies** "*Father forgive them, they no not what they are doing*" (Luke 23:34)
- As we persevere through our persecution – **remember our heavenly reward of peace and joy forever with God**

Conclusion: Why would God show mercy?

To finish up then?

[PowerPoint 4-Why mercy?]

Why would God show us mercy anyway?

The answer can be found in - Ephesians 2:4-10 – which we'll finish with

[PowerPoint 4a-Answer]

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

One of those good works – is to **be merciful to others...**

Let's pray...

Father God, thank you that your word in the Old Testament points us always to your Son Jesus.

Thank you that Jesus – the ultimate merciful one – in His grace and love – showed mercy to us – and purchased forgiveness of our sins by His death on a cruel cross.

Thank you that Jesus offers all who believe in Him – life in your presence forever.

Help us likewise to be merciful to others and in doing so lead people into a relationship with Jesus.

Help us to persevere through any persecution and trials for being a Christian – knowing with have the reward of peace and joy in Heaven, ahead.

In Jesus name, we pray, AMEN.

Benediction (Psalm 91:13)

Let me finish with v13 of Psalm 41 – it's not really part of Psalm 41 – but a doxology [giving glory and praise to God] of the first book of Psalms (Book 1-Psalms 1-41; Book 2-Psalms 42-72; Book 3-Psalms 73-89; Book 4-Psalms 90-106; and Book 5-Psalms 107-150)

Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.