

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

We > Me

PART

4

TITLE

Enduring With One Another

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:14-21



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I hope that you have had a great week. And if you're new with us, thank you. We are thrilled that you are our guests. I want to ask you if you would, let's bow and let's pray together, Father in heaven we come to you, and we come to your word and we believe as a family of faith, that that's what we're doing. We're not just opening a book, an old book, we are looking to you because this is your book. This is your word to us. You have demonstrated to us most proficiently by sending Jesus Christ to save us from our sin, that you are ultimately in deeply committed to our good.

And so when we read things that feel impossible, when we sing things that seem impossible, when we hear from you and we open up your word and we see what you have said, would you give us faith? Would you give us the ability to believe? I pray Father, that you would use this passage to do miracles in our life. God, for those who are keenly obsessed with their own wrath towards mistreatment that they have received, I pray God that you would replace that obsession with a greater obsession of the mercy that they have received from you.

And God I pray that in doing so that you would bring reconciliation to marriages, to families. I pray that you would bring restoration to friends and even life groups, our church family. God, we care about community because this is your people. We need community because without it we're lonely. And yet we live in a way and treat people in a way that so frequently undermines the very community that we need. And so would you open our eyes? Would you help us to see amazing things in your word? Would you help us to see just the glory of Jesus Christ and what Christ means for each one of us?

God, would you renew our perspective of what's happening in the world by helping us to see a greater glory in Christ? And I asked that you would speak through weakness to our hearts, we pray in Jesus name, amen. In your Bible I would love for you to turn with me to Romans chapter 12. If you're in the room, if you're at home please, if you have one near open it up, Romans chapter 12. We're in a series on the importance of living life together, to being in true community in to have relationships in our life.

And the reason this is so important is because we all face something that is so dangerous to us and its loneliness. And we've looked over the last few weeks that what it means to be lonely is not necessarily to be alone. You can be near people in this room at work and the dorm at home where there's people all around and yet you can still feel lonely. And the reason is because loneliness is actually simply the feeling that what I have near me, what I can draw upon is simply not enough for everything else.

And it seems like everybody else simply has more, more people that they can draw upon. Loneliness we've seen as incredibly dangerous. In fact, if you think about rust and what rust can do that even a very thick piece of steel is it can start and it simply appears to the eye. And then all of a sudden it starts as surface rust. But the thing is if you allow that rust to live there, and if you don't deal with it, eventually that rust continues to dig deeper and deeper and deeper into the structure and strength of that steel compromising its ability to do what it's supposed to do. So it is with loneliness.

It appears on the surface and we think it's not such a big deal, at least some of us. But the reality of loneliness is it digs, and it chews, and it continues to chew deep down within the steel of our soul, our heart, our joy, our hope. And as a result of that, what happens is over long seasons of loneliness, what happens is the very support structures of our hope and joy seem to road and collapse. You need people, God designed life to be lived surrounded by other people who love one another, and who encourage one another, pray for one another, care for one another, and who deeply believe in their heart that a life full of we.

Although it may be more complicated to have people in your life is in every way superior than a life that is simply dominated by selfishness in the world, me. And so when we come to Romans 12, what we find here is in some ways, an instruction manual on community life, what's it supposed to look like? How was it built? How was it restored? How was it sustained? All of these things. They're all found in this amazing chapter, 36 imperatives, every one of them building relationships, building community, and every one of them actually are placed on the back of one thing.

And that is the motivation of mercy. In Romans chapter 12, verse one, he says, "I appeal to you, therefore brothers by the mercies of God." In other words, what Paul is doing here is this is he's saying that I have spoken to you now, 11 chapters on what God has done in the world in order to bring you mercy. And you're incentive your motivation, the fuel of your heart in order to carry out everything that I now have of what the Christian life is supposed to look like. It is based solely on your ability to be aware, to remember, to recognize rest upon the mercy that you have received.

So over the last few weeks we've looked at how do we build community by serving one another? We've looked at how in the world do we deepen community? And that's how we love one another. And suddenly we get to this last section. This last section is the most miraculous of all, meaning it's a miracle if it happens. And the reason is because if you're in community with other people, you're in community with people who have a sin nature and old nature. Who sometimes rebels against God, and when we rebel against God, it splashes up and it affects the people who are near us.

What that means is that every single one of us have what is needed internally to destroy the relationships of our life. And therefore the question that Paul finishes this chapter with is "What is it going to take then for all of us as a people to come together to say, we're a family of faith and to stay together, when you're here, when I'm here, when we are here?" This is the miracle. And what he's saying is this is that the only way for that to happen is for you to be dominated by a picture within your heart of mercy, of mercy.

And what we've looked over the last several weeks is some of the highlights of those first 11 chapters. It starts with the really bad news, Romans chapter one, verse 18. I know some of you are like, "Again. You're going to do it again? Like this is your third time." Look, you need to do this every day. You should memorize these specific passages because this is what he's saying. He's saying that, "The wrath of God." We don't even like to think about that. It says that "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and

unrighteousness.”

In other words, when God almighty from heaven looks down upon the earth, he created your life and my life. And he sees things that are unlike him, that's ungodliness, and that are not right in his eyes and his evaluation. It says that his wrath is kindled and directed and aimed at whoever is doing that. It begins there. Then we get the chapter three and he tells us that then we all individually have a problem because we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have all been ungodly. We have all done what is not right, but the gospel that Paul explains in the book of Romans tells us that God's wrath is not the only truth thing about him.

That he is also relentless in love so much so that he made a promise to send his son, the Christ to the earth. In the fullness of time, he came, they gave him the name, Jesus. That's why it says that “God put forward.” He put forward on the earth. What he's saying is this we're in a heaven that I'm putting forward my son, Jesus Christ on the earth in order to do something specific. And that is to be a propitiation, a substitutionary sacrifice, to die in our place, to bleed by his blood in our place that the wage of sin is death.

And we've all sinned fallen short of the glory of God but Jesus Christ came to this earth and he stood in the gap. He took all of our sin upon himself, died for it. And then he took all of the wrath of God. The father's wrath, it was directed towards us. And he took all of that as well. All of it. And what he says is this, “For those who recognize that they have a need.” That's received by faith, for those of us who look and say, “I have a debt before God that I cannot pay.” And he's angry. And that wrath, if verse true, then that wrath is directed at me.

And there's nothing that I can do to earn his forgiveness. He says then he says, “There's nothing you can do.” It's not by our works, but instead, simply out of love, I must trust his propitiation, his sacrifice in my place. For those who do it says that two things happen to us. If we believe in Christ, this says that we become redeemed. That means that our debt has been paid and we are set free. And we are justified, which is God's declaration of your innocence before him, that can only happen if you trust him and he forgives us of all of our sin, and then he gives us his righteousness so that we are innocent in his sight.

And if all of this is true, then what Paul says next is why we should be a people that sing like we mean it. There is therefore, now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. And so what we find here is something that is really important is this mercy that provides power for life together. It's this mercy that provides power to serve one another to love one another. And then what we're going to learn today, how do we endure with one another? And hear this, this is so important.

The reason the church, Christian marriages, Christian homes and churches typically mirror the behavior, the resentment, the lack of forgiveness, the division of people who are outside of Christ is because the mercy of God that's been poured out to us is so far from our consciousness. We become so obsessed with our wrath that is inflamed when someone mistreats us, that we ignore almost entirely the mercy that has come our way,

even though someone else's wrath, which was so much more intense than our own was directed at us.

Some of you will not forgive your husband, your wife, your children, your parents, your pastor. And the reason is because you are blind to how much mercy has come your way. If there is no recognition of verse one, the mercy of God, then the other 36 imperatives are like dead weight. You can't pull them off, but you must carry them. You're going to be held accountable for them. They're life-giving and yet, without the mercy of God that we see that empowers our life to love and forgive one another, we can't do it. And so chapter 12 becomes heavy instead of light. Now chapter 12 and it's call to forgive it becomes so light when you see the mercy of God that's been poured out to us.

See if you and I, we go over to Scotland. We go to St Andrew's and there's this old castle there. And you get to the castle and you go out in front of the castle and there's a road. You can find this and inconspicuous little marker in the concrete there in the pavement. I know some of you are such tarheels you just saw so well, they got UNC right over there. No, this is actually G for George and W for Wishard. And this is the place that George Wishard, a pastor in Scotland was hung and then burned at the stake by Cardinal in the Catholic church, because he was preaching that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone instead of buying indulgences from the Catholic church.

They declared him a heretic, sentenced him to be hung and burned. This is one of our brothers, before they killed him he had just a few moments to behave, to do something in that moment. History tells us that three times, he pled with God in front of everybody to have mercy upon him. And then he pled with those who were in the audience who were Christians to not be ashamed of the Bible. And then he prayed that God would forgive his enemies.

And that's something happening that was strange, the executioner recognized the sincerity of this moment and of this man. And he didn't want to do it, but he knew he had to. And so the executioner asked George, "Would you forgive me of what I'm about to do? Because I don't want your blood on my hands." And we're told there that George, in such mercy, he asked the executioner come near to him. He came near, he kisses him on the cheek and says, "May that be a token of my love and forgiveness of you." Now where does somebody get the motivation to behave like this? You say, "Well, that's an extreme example."

Where do we get the motivation when someone insults us not to insult them back? When we're in a life group and we all have a little where we... It's been a while since we've done this, we have a meal together where everyone brings a little bit of food and somebody without knowing it was yours talks bad about your potato salad. What are you going to do then? You say, "Well, those examples, George and my potato salad. Those are two different things." They are and yet isn't it amazing that our sin can be nasty in both.

Where does the motivation come from? This is where, Romans chapter 12, starting in verse 14, “Bless those who persecute you bless and do not curse them. Rejoice for those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly, never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

If possible so far as it depends on you live peaceably with all, beloved never avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written, vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord. To the contrary if your enemy is hungry feed him, if he’s thirsty give him something to drink, for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” The first thing I want you to see is that God’s mercy compels us to bless those who do us harm. It compels us to bless those who do us harm. Among all the benefits of having people in our life and there is so many, there is also a peculiar burden.

And that is that if you have people in your life, you will get hurt. We all know this to be true. Sometimes we forget it, we’re like, “Ooh, series on community. This is going to be amazing.” But what I’m calling you to do is to assemble your life near other centers. You have people in your life you’re going to get hurt. That’s what happens. And we know this is because everybody who’s been near you has also been hurt, everyone at some point in time, minor, maybe, but everyone. So what are our options where I guess I should say and so there’s verses like verse 14 where he says, “Look, there’s persecution.” In our text it says that, “Evil has been done to us.”

Bad stuff happens and so the question then is, well, what then do we do? Well, there’s really two options, right? One is we can choose a life of loneliness or two, we can choose a life of love. Let’s talk about a life of loneliness. You can just say, “You know what? I’m just done with people. I’m going to move on to some caves somewhere. I got some garden seeds and in time posters, and I’ll just put them up on the wall, wait for Jesus to come back and just forget all these people.” We can do that. And yet this is what we know is true. And CS Lewis spoke to this so adequately, he says, “Love anything and your heart will be broken.

If you want to make sure to keep it, meaning your heart intact, then lock it up safe in a casket of selfishness. But in that casket, it will change. It will not be broken. It will become unbreakable.” It will become like a rock or like the frozen tundra unmoved, unshaken, lacking mercy, and love. The only other option to this is love. And that’s where he goes in verse 14, he says, “Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse.” The word blessed is where we get the word eulogy. When you give a eulogy at a funeral, you’re not talking about a perfect person. And yet we all go out of our way in that moment to say, “You know what we’re going to do. We’re going to speak well of.”

There are things that have happened in my relationship with the person that I’m talking about that weren’t always pleasant. There were times that this person did mistreat me, they’d spoke loud to me, they were rude to me, they lied to me, something happened, right? We don’t necessarily talk about everything, even though it’s true. Now in that moment, we say, “I’m going to bless this person. I’m going to bless the honor of their

name.” And he tells us, “Bless those who persecute.”

And then he tells us, it’s almost a nuance of this, he says, and this is how you’re know if you’re really doing this is, “You’re going to be able to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.” It’s really hard to do those things isn’t it? You think about it, what might be one reason that we would struggle to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep? I think probably that we’re really glad that someone else is weeping. And we’re really sad that they’re rejoice. Now, the fact in this picture, we don’t know who’s in the wrong here. It may be that this child here received a treat and this child is really mad that he received it.

Or maybe the other that this guy stubbed his toe and this guy thinks it’s just hysterical. We don’t know exactly what’s happening, but this is what we do know is that when we’re mistreated by somebody and then suddenly they go through difficulty. Sometimes it’s really, it’s harder to hurt with them when they’ve mistreated us. And the same is also true when something good happens. If somebody lies about us, mistreats us, and then they get the promotion, it takes a really big soul to rejoice with somebody who has done us harm.

Notice how deep Paul is aiming here. You notice in verse 14, when he says, “Look, I want you to bless them and not curse them.” Self-determination just strong will can actually keep us from not cursing. Somebody can mistreat us and instead of saying anything, we can just say, “Just don’t, I’m just leaving.” We walk away we don’t curse anybody, but that’s not what he’s saying. He’s not leaving us with simply don’t curse them back.

He’s saying, “No, I want to call you to do something. That’s actually chose the miracle of God’s mercy.” And that is that in that moment, you’re actually going to bless somebody. We know the miracle and the reason is because Paul was quoting from Jesus from Luke chapter six, where Jesus says “Bless those who curse you and pray for those who abuse you.” In other words, blessing and praying in this case are synonymous. And so what does this mean? Well, this is what it means. Think about this. Prayer is the language of our desire.

What you want to happen is what you pray about, it’s what you ask for. In other words, when he’s saying, “Bless those who persecute you.” What he’s really saying is this, blessing includes wanting their good and praying for it. Now think about how hard it is to want somebody good once they’ve just mistreated you. And that this is the miracle that he’s calling for. This is why without recognition of mercy, this is an impossible weight I’m supposed to want the good of somebody who just insults me. How do I want it? Like I can pursue it out of will, but how do I want it?

Well, you remember what Jesus wanted for you when you were his enemy. And that’s why it’s so imperative that we consider the mercies of Christ every morning. You see Romans five, 10 actually says, “We were enemies of God, enemies of God.” Some of you are like, “Now, I don’t feel like I’ve ever been an enemy of God.” Well that’s because you’re not the offended party. But when you open up the Bible, you get His evaluation of what He felt the relationship was like with you and me, before we trust Christ, he says, “Let me use this word to help you understand what it feels like, what I like about our relationship enemy.”

And yet while it says, “While we were in that state Jesus wanted our good.” And then he pursued our good while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And then he prayed for our good, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they’re doing.” All this to say is that if we’re going to bless other people when we are mistreated then our obsession with our own hurt and our own wrath has to be replaced with an obsession with the mercy that God has given to us. Which is why you can’t stop thinking about mercy.

The second thing I want you to see is that God’s mercy compels us to humble ourselves for harmony. It tells us in verse 16 to, “Humble ourselves for harmony.” That when we think of harmony, there’s really two places that we think about it. One is maybe in relationships where we say, “Oh, there’s a lot of harmony in my marriage” Or something like that. The other is music, but in music, it offers this really great illustration. We know that in harmony in music... Harmony is not sameness.

Meaning it’s not somebody over here singing the exact same note at the same time as this person over here, instead, harmony is the humble arrangement of differences to achieve a greater fullness than any one person could on their own. It requires humility. Because somebody could say, “You know what? I just don’t want to sing that note. I want to sing this note because this note is just this is my note. This is where my voice gets really just displayed majesty was if when I sing here. So I realize Mark over there, he told me to sing harmony over here, but I’m going here. I’m going to hit the big note.” But now there’s no harmony.

And the same thing happens in our homes and in the church, it requires harmony. Which is not everyone being the same, it means different people submitting, humbling themselves, arranging themselves and their gifts for a fuller sound. Notice what he says in verse 16, “Live in harmony with one another.” You can just say community live in harmony with community. And then he tells us how and how he tells us to do it. Some of them are things not to do. He says, “Don’t be haughty, means arrogant, but associate with the lowly.”

Associate means willing to spend time with, you can feel this sometimes, or see it in times where you have a lot of people in a church or something. And so you’re spending time with somebody and you’re like, “That’s interesting.” And then all of a sudden you can see people looking over that person’s shoulder, because they’re like, “You know what? That person over there to spend time with that person over there may be more gratifying or perhaps they have more to give than the person that I’m talking to.” What he’s saying is this is in this moment you happen to be in front of an image bearer of God, we’re going to associate with them.

And not only that, we’re not going to be wise or conceited in your own sight. What he’s saying is this is that if we’re going to enjoy harmony in our relationships and in our community, it’s going to require humility. And yet it’s interesting. We all live in this world, and this world is like a house of mirrors. It’s like going to the carnival and you stand before this house of mirrors and all of a sudden they’re all wonky. And so you stand in one and then one it looks like you have a huge torso, and another you have these huge legs, and another we have this huge head and the same thing happens. We look at the world, the flesh and the devil, and all of a sudden, we’ve start looking we go, “How moral am I? How morally superior am I than others?” And

suddenly you may stand in front of one mirror and suddenly your head is like four feet long and you're like, "I must be so wise, in comparison to all these other ridiculous people around me, look how morally significant I am." It may be ability. I don't know what it is, but this is the deal. When we stand before these mirrors and we allow them, or we yield to them and we think that this is the truest thing about me.

This is who I really am. What it does is it creates a distortion in the way that we view ourself. And that distortion, it typically produces pride, but pride looks different ways. Let me show you four different. It's on a scale for some people, they look in a mirror and all they feel is self hatred. They don't like anything about themselves and yet they can't think about anything but themselves, that's still pride. Self loathing can be just as proud as self boasting it's just in a different direction. Some people it's not self hatred.

They stand in a mirror and they're quite convinced that they have some ability or some morality and yet they look, and it seems like to the world's ignoring how great they are, and so they feel self-pity, and so they spend their time pouting. This is simply pride's response to suffering. I have to go through so much hard time look who I am. Some people it's comes out as self-infatuation. This is where we're just saying, "You know what? I just like myself and I just assume everybody else is as well if they get to know me." And then there's other people and they just go full board, self exaltation.

And this is where you just say, "You know what? I am so amazing and so awesome and so attractive that I need to talk about it all the time, because it's ultimately in your best interest if you recognize how awesome I am." And we don't talk like this, but that's exactly what we do. What I want you to know is that every one of these is toxic to harmony in the community.

Think about it in the sense of choir practice. So we all come to... We're not. This isn't choir practice, but let's just say this we all come, we're like, "Hey, these people, they hate their voice. And so they sit over on the side and they refused to sing. Will that influence this community?" These people, they weren't asked to stand on the front row. And so they're just totally ticked off about it. And so just say, "I'm just not going to sing." And so they go up from the balcony and I just thought, "I'm just sitting here. I don't care what you think." Some people are like, "Man, I'm pretty sure that the brightest lights happened to be on me right now. And that's a good thing."

And then other people say, "I must have the solo and I should really be the only one with a microphone because everybody needs to hear me." And what this does is, this destroys harmony in music. But think about it when you think about gifts, when you think about your life group, if you have some people hating themselves and there's other people pouting about themselves and other people exalting themselves. And what happens is that life group is when you want to leave. And so mercy compels us to humble ourself. You see? And the reason is because God has a different mirror that's truer than all the rest. You stand before the mirror of his word.

And this is what you find, the mirror of the gospel does something that's so unique. And that is that it humbles us without destroying us. And it elevates us without exalting us. It says to us, "It's true." You look at that cross right there. It just screams. You are not the hero. And yet you're very important because you've been created the image of God you've been saved. You've been adopted into his community. You've been given gifts that need to be orchestrated together with other believers so that the hero of that story is glorified above all.

And so let me encourage us to fight pride by pursuing faith. We saw this two weeks ago that the opposite of pride or thinking high of herself is not to think low of yourself. It's faith. He says in verse three, "That we're not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, according to the measure of faith God has assigned." In other words, the alternative to I am everything isn't I am nothing, it's Christ is everything.

And it says here, it's interesting that, "Although faith is an act of our soul, the inclination to believe is actually something that God assigns." So we can't even boast our wisdom to trust Christ because it took the power of Christ to overcome our unbelief and lack of wisdom to believe in him. Don't you see? You have every reason and so do I to be humble because of the mercy of Christ. The third thing we learn is that God's mercy compels us to trust his justice. We've all been wronged. And one of the hurdles to releasing those wrongs in order to restore community, is our desire for justice.

It's the God-given desire for justice. Every culture in the world, something bad happens that is clearly wrong that violates the law that God wrote upon our heart our instinct is to say that's wrong. And so it's only natural that when we feel wronged, the idea of just releasing the insult, the offense to somebody else, it feels like justice is not going to prevail. And so what we do is instead of releasing the wrongs, we rehearsed the wrongs in order to justify our verdict, our pain, and our response to the pain.

But notice what he says in verse 17 and 18 and 19, he says, "Repay, no one evil for evil." Let me skip this. And let me just get down here. First notice these are two sides of the same coin, "Repay. No one, never avenge." You see what this says? Never is a word that speaks about time. No one is a word that speaks about people. In other words, there's never a person and there's never a time to avenge. God has given that power and authority to government, but not individuals. The gospel says hear this, "He has not given us the right or a time to avenge."

So what do we do in the meantime? What he tells us, look what he says there's two things that we're supposed to do in the meantime, "Give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all." That's one, second, "If possible. So far as it depends upon you live peaceably with all." In other words, you're at a little potluck, right? Somebody insults your potato salad. So you can do something, you can talk about the rice and how terrible it is, right? It was over cooked and poorly seasoned.

Or you can pause long enough before you say anything to say, "I'm involved in a community here. And my response is going to be evaluated and not only is it going to be evaluated. It's going to affect the community. And so what would be honorable in this moment? What's the most honorable thing to do in this moment?" Just do that in that moment. Then he says, "You know what? You may not be at peace with everybody. And the reason is because other people have the ability to make their decision." He goes, "But you can do whatever it is that you can on your side of things in order to make for peace." Sometimes you won't have it and that's okay. Now, how is this possible?

I believe it's only possible one way and it's this, laying down the personal burden of vengeance, it's called forgiveness. It's simply another way to trust God's promise that he's going to pick it up. In other words, by laying down, it doesn't mean that the wrong wasn't done, doesn't mean that you won't be vindicated, and it doesn't mean that justice will not be done. It means that the rightful owner of that vengeance will do it. And that's what he says next, "Leave it." That's what he says, "To the wrath of God." For it is written.

"Vengeance is mine." He calls it his possession. You've been harmed. That harm that was done to you is mine. Vengeance of that is mine. It's not yours, it's mine. So when we don't avenge ourselves, what we're doing is actually trusting the Lord's promise. You see God is absolutely committed to uphold the glory of his justice by punishing every sin that violates his righteousness. And that means for those of us who are in Jesus Christ, who have been forgiven, you need to know that God's forgiveness of us who are in Christ, does not mean that our crimes receive no punishment.

It means that the punishment of those crimes past, present and future have been poured out upon Jesus Christ on the cross. You say, "Well then what if those who've never trusted Christ?" Second Thessalonians one says it this way. "When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, and he will be, he's coming, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, who reject him, they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction." You know what this means? It means that every single sin against God will be paid in full in hell by the wrongdoer or by Christ on the cross.

And therefore every sin against us will then also be paid in full by our wrongdoer in hell or by Christ on his cross, where all of our wrongs were also paid. It is that recognition where our wrongs have also been paid that allows us to say that Christian, who did us harm is going to get away with it because Christ who saved us from our sin is dying for that sin too. So let's forgive as we've been forgiven, you do realize that we all love justice for the villain, right?

That's why when we are reading the Bible and find Goliath we're like, "Yay, he dies." Or watching Beauty and the Beast and Gaston falls off the bridge after he's been so mean to the Beast or like, "Yeah." We love justice for the villain, the problem is we all forget that the somebody in the world, we are that villain. And this is why we must never forget his mercy to us. My question is, have you ever received that mercy? Have you ever trusted Jesus Christ as your personal savior? You can do that right now, admitting that you have a need looking to

him in faith, trusting in Jesus Christ, praying to him and saying, “God, would you save me? Would you forgive me?”

He’ll save you. He’ll give you mercy. I urge you today to look to him. There is a deep need that you have. The last thing that I’m I’ll at least tell you what it is. There’s another point we don’t have enough time is that God’s mercy compels us to overcome evil with good. I simply want you to see that we’re followers of a man who died for his wrongdoers. He didn’t just not retaliate. He actually responded with good. And that’s why our text ends by saying, “Look. So if your enemy is hungry, feed him and if he’s thirsty, give him something to drink. Don’t be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.”

In other words, by blessing people in a moment of their air, it will either melt their heart with compassion, or it will prove its hardness. And so let me encourage you to consider that when you are harmed the Christian way is not simply to not retaliate it’s to actually give what you wish they would’ve given. See this idea of live together is very difficult, but it’s absolutely possible. And it’s possible because the spirit of Jesus can live within our heart and does, if we’ve trusted him.

I consider it such an amazing privilege to be a part of Providence, to be a part of this family of faith, to be cared for, prayed for surrounded by people like you. We all need people in our life because life is so difficult. This sermon is the last in the series you think, “Well, what’s next.” What’s interesting is the next series there’s actually a tremendous need for us to be doing what we’re doing in this series.

And that being surrounded with people, we need people to do what’s going to happen next and where are we going next to something that is clear for each and every one of us and that is that life is hard. And the challenges of life spring upon us all a little bit differently for some of us, we just are underneath an enormous weight of guilt, for others it’s anxiety, for others it’s fear. We live in a broken world, all the same and yet that brokenness doesn’t hit us all the same. That’s why we need one another. There’s a word that we use in English that means to be buried or to be submerged under a heavyweight, it’s called overwhelmed. And two years ago, we did a series called overwhelmed.

And two years ago, we looked at different areas within our lives, and in this congregation, that seemed like it was just prevailing challenges in front of us like exhaustion, addiction, chronic pain, shame, things like this. I feel like that’s where we need to go next. Not to the same areas, but starting next week, we’re going to do a little series, this overwhelmed part two. And we’re going to look at these areas fear and what it feels like when we feel forsaken, when somebody abandons us, it’d be great if you’ve been divorced, if someone has broken up with you, if you’ve lost your job and you feel like you had, and now you don’t, what does that feel like?

And how do you work through that? Anxiety, and guilt, and the last one is when we are without hope, sometimes some people, they get to the place without hope that they even consider harming themselves. I only mentioned that for those of you who are parents, when we get to February 28th, that’ll be one of the parts of

that sermon is self-harm how God helps us through those feelings when we feel like that's something that we would want to do. I pray that that'll be encouraging to you. All of us probably know somebody in our life that this could benefit. So this may be a great time for you to invite somebody. So let me pray for us. Father, we love you.

And we thank you for giving us mercy, all the blessings that you've poured out to us, they seem like they're just endless in Christ. We thank you for the motivation to be able to live as we need to live in order to enjoy the things that you say are good for us. We thank you, God, that motivation comes from you. And so I pray for those who are considering trusting Christ, that you would incline their heart in that direction now. And for those of us who have I pray God, that you would help us to look to you now and to sing to you with all of our heart. And we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.



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