

**September 8, 2019 – Elmont Baptist Church**

**Text: Romans 12:1-8**

**Message Series: Church: A Disciple-Making Community**

**Week 5: Mercy & Disciple-Making**

**Introduction:**

1. We're in the middle of looking at the church as a disciple-making community.
  - a. That as a community of Christ-followers, we have one job – to glorify God by making disciples.
  - b. For two weeks we talked about heart issues and said that as Christ-followers not only has our eternity been changed, but the very desires of our heart have been changed.
  - c. And that we would do well to ask ourselves what do we desire most and is it to know, love, and follow Jesus?
  - d. After all, it is our desires that drive our devotions. We are devoted to the things we desire the most.
2. Then we said that the fire to grow your desire for God through Christ is knowledge. To know God.
  - a. We must become more and more a people that are devoted to knowing God.
  - b. And it's not academic. It's a relationship so it is never static. You're either moving closer to Him or farther away. God is not a subject you learn about, but a Person you get to know.
3. Two weeks ago, before taking a week off, we worked to define what we mean by the word Christ-follower or disciple.
  - a. It's a word you hear a lot in church, but may be defined many different ways within the same faith family and none of them be wrong.
  - b. We used Matthew 4:19 for a well-rounded definition and said a disciple is someone that
    - i. Has a relationship with Jesus through belief and repentance: "Follow Me"
    - ii. They are being transformed by Jesus: "And I will make you"

iii. And are living on mission with Jesus: “Fishers of men”

4. Today we’re going start to dig deeper into this idea of community by looking at Romans 12 and begin to see and understand better what gives us the common ground for community.

**Illus:** In about 2003 I met a man named David. We had very little if anything in common. Our pasts, our ages, our upbringing, experiences, ethnicity, hobbies, personalities were all very different from one another. Even from the outside we were very different. He is a 6’4”, 250 lb black man and I was not close to any of those things. There wasn’t anything to draw us together. Except Jesus. And because of Jesus we became very good friends. For a few years, he was one of my closest friends. Our conversations would be about the goodness of God and the unbelievable mercy and grace we experienced that allowed us to enjoy Him. We would often talk about the irony that we would even end up being friends, but even more than that how great God is to provide relationships that not only encourage and strength us, but display to the those around us the power of the gospel.

- a. If being in relationship with Jesus transforms us, often through other relationships, and results in us being on mission with Jesus to love, serve, and reach others, then we can quickly see that everything about our life in Christ will always involve some sense of community – deep relationships.
- b. We are in relationship with Jesus by the mercy and grace of God. We are changed to be more like Jesus by the mercy and grace of God. We are in community with the exact people that can help us most by the mercy and grace of God.

Let’s look at Romans 12:1-8 to see how the Scriptures instruct us on this. For 11 chapters Paul incredibly and deeply unpacks the mercy of God. I love how one author defined mercy as “God’s unrelenting compassion for us, in which He sympathetically entered our sorrow and pain.” After speaking of God’s mercy for 315 verses, Paul then says, “Therefore...”, or in other words, “Because of all that I just explained to you about how the

compassion and pursuit of God make us who were once enemies His children, this is how you should live. This is how that truth should transform you.” And Paul isn’t writing to a person. He’s writing to a church, a community of Christ-followers. When we read, “by the mercies of God” we should hear “because you know God is for you, has saved you, loves you, has changed you, will not let go of you, accepts you, you should delight to live this way.” It’s not “by the MERCY of God”, but “by the MERCIES of God” – the many, abundant, and ongoing mercies of God”. Before we get to how the mercies of God change us in relationship with others, we need to see a couple of important truths that make that possible.

### **The Many Mercies of God...**

#### **1. Make Worship Possible – v. 1**

- a. A Living Sacrifice** – This is a term that makes you scratch your head if you really think about it. A sacrifice dies, but he says to be alive. So what does it mean?
- b. Alive to God; Dead to self and sin** – Much like Paul’s earliest letter to the Galatian believers where he says in Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
- c.** Worship is automatic in our lives, but we do not automatically worship the right thing. We will worship something or someone, but the Scriptures call us to “spiritual worship”.
- d.** We’re not talking about singing at church. We’re talking about thoughts, feelings, words, and actions that delight in making much of Jesus and nothing of us.
- e.** Before coming into relationship with Jesus, you could not worship God. You could not please Him with your life.

- f. But because of the many mercies of God in rescuing you, loving you, accepting you, being for you, and so much more, you can live a life pleasing to Him by continually trusting the love of God, that was brought to you through Jesus, and is empowered in you by the Spirit.
- g. The only way that we can live this life of worship to God through Christ is to be a living sacrifice. To be dead to ourselves and alive to God. You are His and exist for Him.
- h. That's the ultimate goal – to be a true worshipper – to worship in spirit and truth. To live, breath, feel, think, speak, and act to please God through Christ.
- i. And then Paul goes on to explain how it happens. That the many mercies of God make worship possible and...

## **2. Change How We Think – v. 2-3**

### **a. About the world – v. 2**

- i. As long as we think about our relationships, possessions, jobs, and hobbies like those that care nothing for God or His desires, we will think that our hope is in the next election or promotion and live in defeat as those things will never satisfy.
- ii. The instruction is to not think like the world at all, but to have a transformed mind, so that you can have a great confidence that you are walking in the will of God.
- iii. Author, Thomas Constable – “Dedication results in discernment that leads to delight in God's will.”
- iv. Knowing and delighting in God's will will always evade you if your life is not lived in dedication to Christ alone.
- v. And a quick note on being dedicated to Christ alone. That looks far less like a monk in a monastery than it does laughing with friends over dinner.

### **b. About ourselves – v. 3**

- i. This will always be a struggle for us at some level. One reason is that we often spend large amounts of time thinking about how we view others, and not enough time thinking about how we view ourselves. The focus of the instruction here is to be careful how you think about yourself, not others.
- ii. This is where learning about and meditating on the mercies of God help so much.
- iii. It's much more difficult to think about how special you are and what's wrong with others when you spend time meditating on the truth that God did so much to cover your sin and change your heart to know and love Him.
- iv. The only result of that mediation will be humility. But humility is not an absence of confidence. Humility is much less about how someone presents themselves as it is about much someone thinks about and considers others ahead of themselves.
- v. A quiet person can be just as prideful as someone with a more boisterous personality.
- vi. There's nothing to indicate in this verse that we shouldn't be confident, but in fact the opposite as we should know and understand how God has gifted us to serve the body. That requires confidence, not arrogance, and also a servant's heart.
- vii. Someone that is aware and certain of how God has made them and gifted them and has grown a heart of humble service to the body is a ferocious force for the Kingdom.

**Illus:** I was talking with one of our faith family members this week and a name was mentioned of one of our great servants to this church body. He went to be with Jesus last June. His name was Jim Christian. He was not only a church member but a good friend. Other than our staff, I spent more time with Jim than maybe any other church member because of how often he was

on campus serving and volunteering. Jim was a humble servant as much as anyone that I've ever met, but Jim wasn't quiet and didn't lack confidence. He knew how God had gifted him and he used those gifts to serve others. He did everything from church finances to the yard work and all in between. He had worked hard and retired well, but always gave glory to God for everything he had and loved helping and serving people. He didn't think like the rest of the world and always wanted God's best for the faith family he served so well. Through Jim's heart and example we could see how the many mercies of God...

### **3. Make Community a Reality – v. 4-8**

- a. Paul spends 11 chapters in Romans unpacking the truth of all that God has done toward us in mercy and grace through Jesus.
- b. Then in the first two verses of chapter 12 he says this should be your response back to God because of and through the power of His many mercies – be a living sacrifice and have transformed mind to know and do His will.
- c. Then from verse 3 to the middle of chapter 15 he unfolds and explains how as a living sacrifice who lives in the midst of God's will, we will consider, love, serve, and grow deep in relationships – especially those within our faith family. Look at the language.
- d. **We are ONE body in Christ**
  - i. We should desire to be no more independent from one another than you desire your right arm to be independent from the rest of your body.
  - ii. One body with many parts or members and each has a function.
- e. **We have different gifts**
  - i. We see a few spiritual gifts listed here. There are other places you find more (1 Corinthians 12 for instance).

- ii. Spiritual gifts are abilities that God gives you to serve others as you advance the Kingdom.
- iii. We need to know how we are gifted and how we can serve the body, and that is something we will be helping each member understand better in the coming weeks and months.

**f. We need every one of them**

- i. There's not a person or spiritual gift within this faith family that we don't need. That's why you're here, because God wants to use you in service to this faith family.
- ii. Every spiritual gift named in the Scriptures is only displayed or used in relationships or in community. You cannot use your spiritual gift without others.
- iii. You are gifted in a way that someone in this faith family is in need of, but if you are not connected in relationships, then both you and they are missing out.

**Illus:**

I mentioned this a couple of weeks ago, but it applies here as well. Too often we approach church like we do Friday nights in Texas. That as church members our job is to sit in the stands and watch what's happening on the field. We will voice our pleasure or displeasure depending on the performance of those "in the game". There should no spectators in the church.

- iv. The many mercies of God are the common ground for deep community.
- v. The goal is not to have a group of people here that have everything in common. It's to trust God to put together a community that knows and celebrates that they have Jesus in common. That is what highlights the power of the Gospel to a world that needs to see it. This is why Jesus said in John 13:35, "by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

## Closing

1. Weeks ago we talked about having changed desires as a result of trusting Jesus for salvation.
  - a. Maybe you're still struggling with little or no desire to know, love, and follow Jesus.
    - i. Please come talk to one of our leaders up here in just a moment.
    - ii. Ask the Father to give you a desire to want to know, love, and follow Jesus. To be a living sacrifice and live a life of worship.
  - b. Has your mind been transformed to think differently from the world?
    - i. Transformation is not an immediate process and God is patiently getting your attention and letting you know that He still has a plan for your heart to love and adore Him more.
  - c. Is your struggle that you do want to know Him more deeply, but you're not connected in relationships that help you grow in Jesus?
    - i. The God that created you and the Father that adopted you wants you to know Him, and find joy in Him. When we leave in just a few minutes go sign up for a Small Group.
    - ii. Take a chance ask for God's help.

Let's pray and then you stand and sing and reflect on what God has said to you.