

Content in the Mercy of Christ

A meditation with Grace Wulff

This morning's meditation is on a prayer of mercy, often referred to as the Jesus Prayer, and our response as we pray this prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, were similar words cried out by both the tax collector, and then the blind man, as we have read in our text this morning. (Luke 18:1-14, 35-43)

This prayer has been used for many years by Orthodox Christians as part of their



spiritual practice, and many Christians often use it as a daily prayer.

I find myself breathing these words in the midst of many situations. When I hear an ambulance, I whisper, Lord, have mercy, as I silently pray for those who need the ambulance, and for those responding.

When I hear the codes in the hospital, for instance a Code Blue, which indicates that a person is not breathing, I stop

to pray, Lord, have mercy... and I pray for the one afflicted, for the family, for those responding.

We know God is a merciful and faithful God. So why do we need to ask for mercy? We see in the scriptures that Jesus responds to the cry for help, for the acknowledgement that we are in need of a Saviour.

When the tax collector asks for mercy, he desires connection with God, aware of his great need. He is aware that his only access to God is through divine mercy. This is not earned, but is because of God's grace toward us. This is in contrast to the Pharisee who is far more focused on himself and his good deeds than his need for God. Jesus makes it very clear that those who ask for mercy will be redeemed. He has great compassion, and desires us to call on Him!

We could have a meditation on its own, just listening to examples from the Old and New Testament where we are taught to ask for mercy. Here are a few:

Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. Psalm 57:1

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. [Hebrews 4:16](#)

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

[Ephesians 2:4-5](#)

Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good. [Psalm 25:6-7](#)

It is good to pray for mercy! As I pondered these words, I also thought of how we don't always receive what we ask for. Does God fail in his mercy at these times?

This became very personal to me recently, when I became sick and had to take some time off of work. I prayed for mercy. And frankly I was not happy about the interruption in my life, or the pain.

I asked a friend to pray and she directed me to these words from 2 Corinthians 12: where Paul is talking about his own physical difficulties. ⁸ *Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.* ⁹ *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.* ¹⁰ *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.*

For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I wasn't sure about boasting about my weaknesses, in fact we joke that as we get older, our gatherings can be full of conversations about what is wrong with us. Some call it organ recitals! Aging can produce all sorts of difficulties, and younger people are not immune either.

I do know that my own physical challenges and weakness have given me valuable tools of empathy and understanding as I visit patients at the hospital. I am not a stranger to grief or illness. I know many of you will relate.

Henri Nouwen, in his book "The Wounded Healer", speaks of this very thing. In our weaknesses, we call out for mercy, and God provides exactly what we need. It is not always the comfortable life that we have come to expect in our culture, but a life of dependence on God and complete trust in what he has for us, and that He will work it to our good.

This was truly a theme in the life the apostle Paul, who spoke of many of his hardships and tribulations, and yet in Philippians 4, he speaks of deep contentment. *"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every*

situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Because of our relationship with Jesus, we can learn to be content in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

Contentment does not come without relinquishment.

Trust and Surrender almost always come first, as we let go of being in control, and trust God with our lives. This does not always come easy. As we learn to practice trust, we can also experience a deep rest, knowing God is faithful and wants the best for us.

I will end with a story from the hospital that happened recently. I was on my way to visit a woman in the hospital who had been a patient for months. On my way I met a doctor who I don't see often and he said to me... you need to see a woman in this room. Not whom I had planned to see! And so I went. I am so grateful God guides my paths!

The woman I saw was in her 70's, young to be dying of cancer, I thought. But she was radiant, and yes I would say, she was content. She wanted to go and see Jesus, she told me, she was quite ready. In fact, she was wondering why it was taking so long.

We talked of what it meant to wait, that each day was a

gift. I shared with her the story of my own mother, who waited three months at hospice, wondering why it took so long for her to die.

Those days with my mom were a gift to me, and to her. The conversations we had! The prayer times, the hugs, the care. It was a precious time, even in



the sadness.

I then shared with this lady my bookmark, Strength, which I use over and over again, in my hospital visitations. It has these words from Philippians 4: *"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength."* as well as the words from Isaiah 40:31, and as I read them to her she burst into song...

*They that wait upon the
Lord will renew their strength
They will mount up on wings
as eagles
They will run and not grown
weary
They will walk and not faint
Teach me Lord, teach me
Lord, to wait.*

As I sang with her, the tears came to my eyes. In her suffering she showed great courage, and we prayed together as she goes through this waiting time.

Yes, we pray for mercy. We know we have a merciful and loving God.

Who teaches us to wait, to
be content in whatever our
circumstances, for He is with us
always.

Lord Jesus Christ, have
mercy on us, we pray. Thank
you that You are everything we
need to live this life on earth,

and that in your strength, we
can be content, whatever our
circumstances. You are our
hope, our strength, our all in
all. Amen.