Are We Merciful?

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8He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly j with your God.

Micah 6:8

13because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James 2:13

9The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

Introduction:

When you were growing up did you always want a second chance if you messed up or made a mistake? Maybe you got in trouble with your parents or may you messed up on an assignment at school or at work and you just wanted another chance to make it right and in the process you wanted Mercy. In some instances you may have gotten mercy and in other instances you did not. Hopefully both experiences taught you a life lesson and brought you wisdom to use later on in life.

*New King James Version*

*Naaman’s Leprosy Healed*

5 Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, *but* a leper. 2And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman’s wife. 3Then she said to her mistress, “If only my master *were* with the prophet who *is* in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.” 4And *Naaman* went in and told his master, saying, “Thus and thus said the girl who *is* from the land of Israel.”

5Then the king of Syria said, “Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.”

So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand *shekels* of gold, and ten changes of clothing. 6Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said,

Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.

7And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, “*Am* I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me.”

8So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

9Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha’s house. 10And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and *you shall* be clean.” 11But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out *to me,* and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’ 12Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. 13And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, “My father, *if* the prophet had told you *to do* something great, would you not have done *it?* How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” 14So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, “Indeed, now I know that *there is* no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant.”

16But he said, “*As* the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.” And he urged him to take *it,* but he refused.

17So Naaman said, “Then, if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord. 18Yet in this thing may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord please pardon your servant in this thing.”

19Then he said to him, “Go in peace.” So he departed from him a short distance.

*Gehazi’s Greed*

20But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, “Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but *as* the Lord lives, I will run after him and take something from him.” 21So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw *him* running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, “*Is* all well?”

22And he said, “All *is* well. My master has sent me, saying, ‘Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.’ ”

23So Naaman said, “Please, take two talents.” And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed *them* to two of his servants; and they carried *them* on ahead of him. 24When he came to the citadel, he took *them* from their hand, and stored *them* away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed. 25Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, “Where *did you go,* Gehazi?”

And he said, “Your servant did not go anywhere.”

26Then he said to him, “Did not my heart go *with you* when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? *Is it* time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? 27Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever.” And he went out from his presence leprous, *as white* as snow.

*New International Version*

Naaman Healed of Leprosy

5 Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. f

2Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. 3She said to her mistress, “If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”

4Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. 5“By all means, go,” the king of Aram replied. “I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. 6The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: “With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.”

7As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, “Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!”

8When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: “Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.” 9So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. 10Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”

11But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. 12Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

13Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed’!” 14So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

15Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”

16The prophet answered, “As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

17“If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. 18But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this.”

19“Go in peace,” Elisha said.

After Naaman had traveled some distance, 20Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, “My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”

21So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. “Is everything all right?” he asked.

22“Everything is all right,” Gehazi answered. “My master sent me to say, ‘Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.’ ”

23“By all means, take two talents,” said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. 24When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.

25When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?”

“Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.

26But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves? 27Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.

*A Common Problem for Man with God*

What Gehazi is experiencing is a common problem with mankind toward each other, the hardening of one’s heart toward his neighbor and/or enemy and yes, even toward God.

Gehazi is upset that Naaman, this Syrian commander, has not paid the price for what he has done against Israel. And to make matters worse, Naaman has been graciously healed at no cost. How dare Elisha, a prophet of God, handle this situation this way! This comes up over and over again in scripture throughout the Bible.

Gehazi did not want Elisha (who represented God, who was a servant to God in the function of a prophet) to respond with Mercy and compassion!

\*Do any other examples come to mind? Of course! Jonah!

Now we know through our study of the Bible that the Assyrians were a very wicked people. So what was Jonah’s problem with doing what God commanded him to do?

10When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah’s Anger at the Lord’s Compassion

4 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2He prayed to the Lord, “Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” Jonah 3:10-4:3

God did not respond the way Jonah wanted Him to respond toward the Assyrians!

Jonah did not want God to respond with Mercy and compassion! He wanted those terrible and wicked people not to repent and for God to blast them off the face of the earth.

How about the older brother of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25-32)? What happened when the prodigal returned? His Father saw him coming from afar off and said kill the fattened calf my son who once was lost now is found!

But! How did the older brother respond? He was angry and refused to go to the party (Luke 15:28). The older brother then begins to point out all the sinning that the younger brother did against his father such as “squandering your land with prostitutes (Luke15:30).

Do you see the older brothers mistakes and problems?

How could you (the father) let him back?

Look at all the sinning he did against you!

\*Do you see the older brothers problem? NO Mercy! NO Compassion!

Do you remember the story about the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). Jesus tells the story about laborers who came to work in the vineyard at various times of the day but they were all paid the same. Of course the ones who worked the longest were upset. But they had agreed to the terms of one denarius.

This is the essence of Gehazi’s problem, Jonah’s problem, the workers who worked all day’s problem.

Every one has a problem with the merciful nature of God! They have a problem with a generous God! They have a problem with the mercy of God! They hate it!

Why? Because it doesn’t make any since to us, it’s not fair by OUR STANDARDS!

What? Wait? By who’s standards are we living by anyway?

We had better be living by God’s standards! Because those are the only Standards that matter!

\*So why have we looked at these examples of those who have been unmerciful?

What is the issue? The issue is that we are taking the place of God and judging what that person has done is unforgivable.

We are saying that people we judge do not deserve the mercy of God! Why? Because what they have done is too severe!

What happened every time Jesus went to eat or spend time with or interact with “sinners”? The pharisees, saducees, and scribes complained about it and judged Him immediately! He was even called a blasphemer and a devil…etc…

Gehazi thinks that Naaman needs to pay-up and to who else but him, Gehazi, for his own personal gain!

Jonah thinks the Assyrians should pay-up for raiding Israel. They should not get what God gives to Israel.

We can judge like the older brother in the prodigal son that some have done so much that they can never be forgiven!

It is not right in our minds for God to save that one!

It is not right for God to bless or be generous to that one!

I hope we all realize that none of us deserve to be saved, or receive the grace of God, no not one of us. We are all sinners! We do not deserve God’s Love or generosity.

But who is it in your mind right now that you will not forgive until you get that vengeance or revenge on, that pound of flesh from, before you die, to settle the score?

Will you not show Mercy or kindness because they hurt you too much?

That is what Gehazi did, he took it upon himself to make Naaman pay for what he had done to the people of Israel, of course he did not tell anyone and kept all the goods to himself for his own selfish gain even though God through Elisha did not require payment.

Do we lash out or plan secretively to make people pay for what they have done to us to hurt us?

Do we make our spouses pay for transgressions against us?

Do we make our children pay for transgressions against us?

Do we make our co-workers pay for transgressions against us?

Do we think we do not need to ever let people off the hook for transgressions against us?

Isn’t it time to show the Mercy, grace, and compassion of Christ?

Instead of trying to exert a power over someone we really don’t have in the first place.

Shouldn’t we use the example we’ve been shown by Christ extending Mercy and grace to our fellow man (neighbor) so that others can see Christ living in us?

If they, whoever they are that we are judging don’t deserve Mercy and grace then NEITHER DO WE!

We can only be the examples we need to be when we see how underserving we are to receive the Mercy of God!

Naaman, an idolatrous Syrian commander receives mercy!

Gehazi, the Israelite servant of Elisha receives judgement!

This is the point Jesus made in Luke 4:27

27And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

So how do we look at sinners who harm us or wrong us, fail us or failed God?

Do we expect them to live by our standards and be worthy of our forgiveness or kindness or God’s?

Or are we looking out on our fellow man as Christ did from the cross with compassion, love and Mercy! God does not want any to perish but all come to Him through repentance!

How do we obtain the Mercy of God?

Hear

Believe

Repent

Confess

Be Baptized for the remission of sins

And continue to live the Christian life until we leave this earth.