

“God's Compassion and Mercy” Micah 7:14-20 Trinity 3 2024

Dear brothers and sisters, today we are going to dive into a beautiful passage from the book of Micah. It's a passage that really highlights the heart of our God, His immense compassion, and His unending mercy.

As the Catholic priest Henri Nouwen once said, "God's mercy is greater than our sins. There is an awareness of sin that does not lead to God but to self-preoccupation. Our temptation is to be so impressed by our sins and failings and so overwhelmed by our lack of generosity that we get stuck in a paralyzing guilt. It is the guilt that says, 'I am too sinful for God to love me.'" But friends, this is not the message of our God. His mercy is far greater than we can fathom!

This passage paints a vivid picture of God as a shepherd, guiding His people with His staff, leading them to fertile pasturelands. This imagery is not just a metaphor; it's a reflection of God's deep compassion for His people. A shepherd's role is not just to lead, but to protect, to provide, and to care for the flock. Similarly, God's compassion is not just about feeling pity or sympathy; it's about actively caring for us, providing for our needs, and protecting us from harm.

God's compassion is closely linked with His mercy: In this passage, we see a God who "pardons sin and forgives the

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transgression of the remnant of his inheritance." This is a God who does not hold our sins against us, but instead, chooses to forgive. This is a God who "does not stay angry forever but delights to show mercy." This is a God who "will again have compassion on us; who will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."

The mercy of God is an incredible thing. It's not just about forgiving us when we mess up; it's about completely erasing our sins, throwing them into the depths of the sea. This is a powerful image. When something is thrown into the depths of the sea, it's gone. It's not just out of sight, it's irretrievable. That's how God deals with our sins when He shows us mercy. He doesn't just forgive and forget; He eradicates our sins completely.

In the passage, God promises to "be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago." This is a God who keeps His promises, who remains faithful to His people, and who continues to show love and mercy, generation after generation.

So now I want to challenge you - If God is so compassionate and merciful to us, shouldn't we also be compassionate and merciful to others? As recipients of God's compassion and mercy,

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we are called to be conduits of His compassion and mercy. We are called to forgive as we have been forgiven, to love as we have been loved, and to show compassion as we have been shown compassion.

Compassion is not simply an emotion or a feeling, but rather an active choice to empathize with others, to share in their suffering, and to actively seek to alleviate it. This is the kind of compassion that Jesus demonstrated throughout His life and ministry, and it is the kind of compassion that God continually shows us.

The prophet Micah paints a picture of a God who not only pardons sin but also delights in showing mercy. This is a God who does not hold onto anger but instead chooses to have compassion on us. This compassion is not a one-time event but a recurring theme in our relationship with God. He continually forgives us, treads our sins underfoot, and hurls our iniquities into the depths of the sea. This is a powerful image of a God whose compassion is active, intentional, and relentless.

Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion

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requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.

This is a compassion that does not shy away from our messiness, our brokenness, and our sinfulness. Instead, it meets us right where we are and loves us too much to leave us there. This is the compassion that drove Jesus to the cross, the compassion that forgives our sins and makes us new.

As recipients of His compassion, we are called to extend the same compassion to others. This is not always easy, especially when we are faced with people who have hurt us or situations that seem beyond redemption. But we are reminded that our ability to show compassion is not based on our strength but on God's strength working within us. As we draw from the well of God's compassion, we find the capacity to show compassion to others, even in the most challenging circumstances. As we strive to understand and emulate God's compassion, we find ourselves transformed and empowered to bring His love and mercy to a hurting world.

Mercy, in its simplest definition, is the compassionate treatment of those in distress, especially when it is within one's

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power to punish or harm them. It's the act of not giving us what we deserve. When we look at God's mercy, it's not just about Him being kind or forgiving, it's about Him choosing to withhold the punishment we rightly deserve for our sins.

Micah provides a clear picture of God's mercy. Our Father pardons sin, forgives transgressions, and does not stay angry forever. He delights in showing mercy. This is a God who, despite our rebellion and disobedience, chooses to forgive and restore. This is a God who, despite our sin, chooses to love and redeem. His mercy is not a reluctant act, but a delight. It's not a duty, but a joy. This is a love that is willing to forgive the most heinous sins, a love that is willing to restore the most broken relationships, a love that is willing to redeem the most lost souls.

Because of His mercy, we are not consumed by our sins. Because of His mercy, we are not left in our brokenness. Because of His mercy, we are not abandoned in our rebellion. Instead, we are forgiven, restored, and redeemed. As the passage says, "You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." This is a promise of continual mercy, of unending forgiveness. The passage speaks of the "remnant of his inheritance," indicating that God's mercy

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extends to His people as a whole. This is a mercy that heals not just individual hearts, but entire communities.

Micah reveals to us the heart of God. A heart that loves deeply, forgives freely, and redeems completely. It's a heart that chooses to withhold punishment and instead, pours out grace. It's a heart that delights in showing mercy, in restoring relationships, in redeeming lives. This is the heart of our God, and the significance of His mercy.

So, there you have it. We serve a God who is not only mighty and powerful, but also compassionate and merciful. He pardons our sins, casts them into the depths of the sea, and delights in showing us mercy. We are His inheritance, His beloved children. He shepherds us, guides us, and provides for us. And He is faithful to His promises, just as He was to Abraham and Jacob.

Let's remember this truth as we go about our week. Let's strive to show the same compassion and mercy to others that God shows to us. And let's never forget that no matter how great our sins, God's mercy is greater still. Amen.