**A Lesson in Mercy**

**…** Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **2**Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. **3**The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and placing her in the midst **4**they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. **5**Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” **6**This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. **7**And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” **8**And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. **9**But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. **10**Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” **11**She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more. (John 8:1-11, ESV)

Mercy covers over1 all kinds of sin.

Greetings dearly beloved, as we talk today about mercy. Why is it important, and what is its connection to our faith-journey in this world? First of all, the word “mercy” in Greek is “*eleos*”, which means pity or feeling for someone who is suffering. Also, the term is an act which shows God’s mercy or pity. We’re going to see the importance of mercy from Jesus’ example today, and my hope is that this will lead us to be more aware and compassionate toward those who suffer around us. Mercy covers over a multitude of sins.

Jesus’ mercy is our prime example – if He forgave a total sinner, then our task is no different. The situation itself was not a very complicated one. A woman was caught in the act of adultery. The Law, which knows no mercy but only justice, condemns to death such a severe infraction. The religious leaders of the day were ready to apply the Law, but it was even more important for them to test Jesus to see His level of commitment to the Mosaic Law. For them, a man of God could only be a man of the Law – and not one led by the Holy Spirit, nor one led by the Father’s Love. In the account, Jesus was writing on the ground; many say that he was writing sins – while others, the accusers’ names (next to their sins). Still others think that he was writing “forgiven” – the new God-given status of the woman. Whatever He was writing, it was certainly connected with the situation at hand. And, on top of that, his most important act of mercy and salvation turned out to be his one word to the accusers: “Whoever is sinless may cast the first stone at her.” The elderly understood quickly; then the others, with the whole lot of them leaving the scene.

This reminds me of a situation in 1995 when a mother lost her 3-year-old boy to drive-by shooting. The mother had been trying to rush the little girl inside but had left her two small boys in the car. Only a few minutes later, two gangs began firing on each other and one group accidentally fired on an unintended car. One of the mother’s sons survived – the other died. The killer was 15 years old at the time.

Seventeen years passed by, and the mother decided to visit her son’s killer in prison. There, face to face, the boy, clutching his chest with uncontrollable tears, said, “I messed up.” And the mother knew that it was a genuine confession. Before she left the prison that day, the mother hugged the boy. She said, “I accepted him as my son, because he was absent of his parents.” She said that she didn’t want to him to suffer anymore because he had such a hole in his heart for taking my son’s life.” Also, she considered that the experience (in the prison with the killer) brought a sort of closure for her unanswered questions. Years later, that mother continued to speak with the boy, twice a week, and would often put money in his prison account to care for his basic needs.

Mercy covers over sins. Yes, all of us have gone through extremely difficult situations in our lives. The injustices are always there, and often it is easier to deal with those who sin against with pure justice. However, the above Biblical account shows us that it is possible to be like God and show mercy to the undeserving. The woman caught in adultery, thru her sin, was corrupting the atmosphere of a holy people (set apart for God). She was causing someone’s son, and even herself to stray from God’s path and to fall deeper into the claws of hell. Jesus, however, released from all that with one word: “Is anybody left to condemn you?” “No Sir.” “Then go, and sin no more.”

Today, you and I are called to have the same soft and compassionate heart (as Jesus). The opportunities to be purely just are abundant – especially when we are in the right, it often feels even *more* right to punish the transgressor. But why don’t we, instead of the latter, show mercy to the wrongdoer, and through that show them one aspect of God’s Good nature.

If God forgives and has mercy on us, then how can we not forgive those who still have not had the chance to feel or even hear about God’s mercy? Jesus’ mercy is our prime example of compassion – if He forgave a total sinner, then our task is no different. Mercy covers over all kinds of sin.

The Lord bless you, Amen.