

THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 10: MERCY SPEAKS

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you.” (Leviticus 23:22, NIV)

IF THERE IS MERCY TO BE FOUND IN THE GAME OF GOLF, we might define it with one of a golfer’s favorite words: gimme.

The gimme doesn’t belong in serious tournament stroke play, of course, but it is a staple of the once-a-week crowd. It speeds play, yes, but its more beloved purpose is to relieve the casual player of some unnecessary jitters. And in this way, giving a friend a putt can be a real show of mercy.

The idea of mercy is oddly controversial, both in and out of the church. Think of a child, an aging adult, or an acquaintance with a handicap, and we all think, *There’s a candidate for mercy*. There are also those down on their luck, and for them a touch of mercy serves as a warm light against the darkening backdrop of life.

But generally speaking, we also reserve a place in our minds for those who deserve no mercy. They are opponents, enemies, and inconsiderate drivers. When someone speeds past us on the right then cuts us off to get back into our lane, the first thought to snap across your brain—admit it—is not, *I need to render mercy to such a soul!* Rather, we start crying out for justice: “Where is that state trooper now?!”

Because of this dichotomy, many people see two different gods in Scripture: “the god of mercy” and “the god of justice.” And frequently, that delineation is drawn between the testaments. The God of the Old Testament—he’s the just one, demanding that laws be abided by, like steps in assembling DIY furniture. One slip, and it could all come crashing down. Meanwhile, the God of the New Testament, as revealed in Jesus, speaks of mercy and comes as the gentle Lamb.

But as with all aspects of biblical righteousness, mercy is unveiled in the Old Testament and continued in the New. It was God in the Old Testament who established the gleaning laws for the poor and the alien. It was God in the Old Testament who directed his people to pity the wayward animals of even their enemies (Exodus 23:4-5). King David even chose the punishment of God in the Old Testament, knowing that the mercy of YHWH prevailed over the harshness of men (2 Samuel 24:14). Jesus took up the mercy of this God, his Father, and showed us how important it remains.

Opening questions What is the kindest thing you have ever seen one golfer do for another on the course? How can mercy prevail even when the circumstances are competitive?

READING Ruth 2:1-23, Matthew 18:21-35, Romans 12:6-8

A man of mercy
How did Boaz demonstrate mercy for Ruth’s sake, applying the law of God we see in Leviticus 23:22? How did this mercy stand out (v. 22)?

A vivid parable
What contrast in the rendering of mercy do we see in Matthew 18? How does this parallel the mercy shown to us by God and the mercy we should show to others?

A gift of the Spirit
What do you think the gift of mercy dispensed in our time looks like?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at <http://youtu.be/QOUJF52doqo>