

**Love and Mercy Are What Everyone Needs  
based on Mark 10:46-52, David Jahnke, 8/16/15**

I covered much of chapter 10 in Mark's gospel during Lent this year. But I want to review and comment upon the mood of the whole chapter which contrasts the attitudes of a rich man and the disciples with the attitudes of Jesus, children and Bartimaeus.

Everyone in this chapter is wanting Jesus' attention. The rich man wants a lesson from a rabbi; children want to play; the disciples want a special favor; blind Bartimaeus cries out for mercy.

Jesus' followers presumed that Jesus did not have time for children or Bartimaeus. They tried to turn the children away and when Bartimaeus shouted out to Jesus for mercy, people were trying to quiet him.

This raises many questions for us: 1. Who do we have time for? Are any of us tired of feeling worn down by loved ones with new or chronic illnesses in mind, body or spirit? Or by young children calling for our attention? Or by teenagers contradicting and resisting us?

I can relate to all of these positions. A church member posted a great piece on the struggle between teens and parents. I want relay a part of this pretend letter from a teenager to his parents:

Dear Parent:

This is the letter I wish I could write.

This fight we are in right now. I need it. I can't tell you this because I don't have the language for it and it wouldn't make sense anyway. But I need this fight. Badly. I need to hate you right now and I need you to survive it...It doesn't matter what this fight is even about: curfew, homework, my messy room, going out, staying in, boyfriend, girlfriend, no friends, bad friends. It doesn't matter. I need to fight you on it and I need you to fight me back.

I desperately need you to hold the other end of the rope. To hang on tightly while I thrash on the other end—while I find the handholds and footholds in this new world I feel like I am in. I used to know who I was, who you were, who we were. But right now I don't. Right now I am looking for my edges and I can sometimes only find them when I am pulling on you. When I push everything I used to know to its edge. Then I feel like I exist and for a minute I can breathe. I know you long

for the sweeter kid that I was. I know this because I long for that kid too, and some of that longing is what is so painful for me right now.

I need this fight and I need to see that no matter how bad or big my feelings are—they won't destroy you or me. I need you to love me even at my worst, even when it looks like I don't love you....

This is the fight that will teach me that my shadow is not bigger than my light. This is the fight that will teach me that bad feelings don't mean the end of a relationship. This is the fight that will teach me how to listen to myself, even when it might disappoint others.

And this particular fight will end. Like any storm, it will blow over. And I will forget and you will forget. And then it will come back. And I will need you to hang on to the rope again. I will need this over and over for years.

I know there is nothing inherently satisfying in this job for you. I will likely never thank you for it or even acknowledge your side of it. In fact I will probably criticize you for all this hard work. It will seem like nothing you do will be enough. And yet, I am relying entirely on your ability to stay in this fight. No matter how much I argue. No matter how much I sulk. No matter how silent I get.

Please hang on to the other end of the rope. And know that you are doing the most important job that anyone could possibly be doing for me right now.

Love, Your Teenager [The Letter Your Teenager Can't Write You, Gretchen Schmelzer]

Our loved ones who are going through something new and stressful or have a chronic problem or feel otherwise helpless in mind, body or spirit also need someone safe to cry and lash out to and let our stress and fears and anxieties out upon. They need something and someone to cling to; someone they can trust will never let them go.

There is almost always something else going on under the surface whenever someone cries or lashes out at us. Sometimes it is clear what is going on; other times not at all. So we take time—take the time to inquire or simply listen or play just as Jesus took time for the children and Bartimaeus and the disciples and the rich man.

And when we forget the deeper things that are probably going on, the surface things often end up turning into debates about what and who is right and good. This was going on with the rich man who wanted to hear Jesus' thoughts on inheriting eternal life. Jesus basically told him that the intellectual matters were already settled and the man already knew the answers. What really mattered was the man's heart. The rich man had been so blessed by God and the question was would he follow Jesus and continuously give to those in need?

The Pharisees and scribes were always seeking to engage Jesus in intellectual debates regarding politics and religion. The followers of Jesus thought this was the "important business" that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to pursue. He was truly good and right and smart and thus should be in power to spread the good and right. Jesus knew that the debates were about power but he also told the rich man that there was only One who was good and right and had power over all— God had power over Herod and Pilate. So Jesus was interested in empowering the weak from below, rather than having power over.

He was willing to talk about these high-level intellectual things, he always brought it back to the heart of the matter which in chapter 10 involved: 1. telling the rich man to give continuously, 2. playing with children and calling people to be like them-- playful and joyful and not so serious, 3. telling the disciples that following him meant sacrifice instead of glory, and 4. healing the blind man. So as we engage in intellectual and biblical and theological discussions, we should never forget that Jesus cares more about where our heart is than where our head is.

You may have heard about the new phenomenon Emotional Intelligence. This is kind of what I am talking about. I keep finding things in Jesus' teachings that are being confirmed by the social sciences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century! Look into this subject and you will find that scholars have found that EQ—your ability to understand people's emotions and remain calm-- is much more important in leading than IQ. And I would suggest the same goes for being agents of healers. Because when our hearts are in the right place, we are less concerned about winning the head arguments or getting our way. We can let things go and bring health to our homes and communities.

But none of this means pandering to others. In fact, the state of our hearts is the critical piece of offering to the other what they really need...which is Jesus. Jesus told the rich man he needed to give away everything that would keep him from following him. He told the disciples that following him meant sacrifice. He asked the blind man what he wanted; in other words was he ready for new life with him? Unlike the rich man, the blind beggar was ready; he wanted to see and follow Jesus.

So do we want to see as God sees? Do we want Kingdom Vision? Do we want to believe in and receive and share the Love and Mercy that transforms everything? Going back to the letter between the teenager and parent-- God is the one holding the rope in our life struggle. And He never lets go. And so we can struggle with God, rather than the world.

I was berated horribly by someone a few months back. It was so awful that I could not reply, until yesterday. I contacted her and let her know that she was loved by so many but more importantly that she was loved by the Creator who so wants her to receive and share universal Love and Mercy.

I included this video from Beach Boy Brian Wilson. He was someone who had this great intellect; he is generally considered to be one of the musical geniuses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But he had multiple meltdowns just like my loved one. But these mental and emotional breakdowns melted his heart and brought clarity to what really matters. And he wrote this song...

I was sittin' in a crummy movie with my hands on my chin  
Oh the violence that occurs...seems like we never win

Love and mercy that's what you need tonight  
So, love and mercy to you and your friends tonight

I was lyin' in my room and the news came on T.V.  
A lotta people out there hurtin' and it really scares me

Love and mercy that's what you need tonight  
So, love and mercy to you and your friends tonight

I was standin' in a bar and watchin' all the people there  
Oh the loneliness in this world well it's just not fair

Hey love and mercy that's what you need tonight  
So, love and mercy to you and your friends tonight [Love and Mercy from the album Brian Wilson]

Love and mercy incarnate came to the blind man. It came to this world from heaven and it is indeed what everyone needs. I hope that my loved one will, in her desperation, cry out to Jesus for love and mercy. And may we all choose to let them reign in our heart and thus find salvation again and again along with the courage to follow Jesus. I would like to take a moment to pray in that regard. Let us pray...

*Lord, we are so like Bartimaeus, though we may not want to admit it. But deep down, we know we are broken and perishable and in need of Your Love and Mercy. So thank you for sending your Son who showed us how full of love you are for everyone. We believe and pray that You would help us in our unbelief. Open the eyes of our hearts to the presence of Jesus. Send His Spirit of Love and Mercy which are always around us into our hearts. We open ourselves to your saving grace, Father, and pray that you would give us the strength and courage to follow Jesus... We pray all this in His holy name...*