

Fill My Cup With Grace **Luke 6: 27-38**

As I was reflecting on today's message in preparation for this sermon, two emotions kept surfacing—hope and heaviness. On one hand, there's hope, this deep longing that if we truly lived by Jesus' words, the world would be a much better place. Imagine that—a world shaped by love, grace, and generosity. But at the same time, there's the weight of reality. We know how hard it is to actually live this out. It's not just challenging—it feels nearly impossible at times. Let's be honest. When someone slaps me, my first instinct isn't to turn the other cheek—it's to slap them back twice as hard! When we give something to someone, we at least expect a thank you—some kind of acknowledgment. And because of this, Jesus' words can feel more like an unreachable ideal than a reality we can live by. And yet... this is the life Jesus calls us to.

And if I'm honest, there are days when my cup feels empty. Days when I feel like I have nothing left to give—no more patience, no more forgiveness, no more grace. Have you ever felt that way? Like we're constantly pouring out, trying to be kind, trying to be patient, trying to be merciful, but at some point, our cup runs dry?

A World Running Dry on Mercy

In fact, we live in a world where many people's cups are running dry—dry of grace, dry of compassion, dry of mercy. And when people's cups are empty, what happens? They lash out. They hoard. They refuse to give, because they feel they have nothing left. We see this played out in public discourse, where those in need are often met with judgment rather than kindness.

Recently, Elon Musk, the richest person in the world, made headlines when he referred to those receiving public assistance as the "parasite class." Think about that for a moment. Instead of recognizing that people fall on hard times, that many work multiple jobs just to survive, that countless individuals—including veterans, single parents, and people with disabilities—depend on public aid not out of laziness but out of necessity, he dismissed them as parasites. Where is the mercy in that? Jesus said, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:36) And mercy doesn't sort people into categories. Mercy sees the human being before the circumstance.

I believe you have heard the tragic story of 11-year-old Jocelynn Rojo Carranza from Gainesville, Texas. Jocelynn faced relentless bullying at school because of her family's immigration status. Classmates threatened to call immigration authorities to arrest and deport her parents, instilling fear and isolation in her young heart. Despite her suffering, the school failed to inform her family about the severity of the bullying or the counseling sessions she was receiving. Tragically, Jocelynn died by suicide on February 8, 2025. But where do children learn to treat others this way? They learn it from the world around them. They hear the way adults talk about immigrants—as burdens, as problems, as people who don't belong. They absorb the unspoken message that some lives are worth less than others. And so the cycle continues. Where is the mercy in that?

This is the world we live in—a world quick to judge and slow to understand. A world where success is praised, but struggle is condemned. A world that forgets that at some point, all of us have received mercy and grace—from a parent, a teacher, a friend, or even from God. A society without mercy is a brutal place to live. It crushes people under its weight. It divides us into "deserving" and "undeserving," forgetting that Jesus never did that. Jesus never sorted people into categories of worthy and unworthy. Instead, Jesus healed the outcasts, dined with sinners, and lifted up the poor.

But when mercy runs dry, we turn against each other. A society without mercy is also a divided society. The less mercy we have, the more rigid and self-righteous we become. Instead of listening, we argue. Instead of seeking understanding, we rush to judge. Instead of building bridges, we tear each other apart.

That's why what this world desperately needs is merciful people. Merciful people are like oases in a desert. They soften hardened hearts. They break down barriers and create space for healing. And Jesus calls us to be those people.

What It Means to Be Merciful

Mercy is not just a feeling—it's a way of being. It's stepping out of our own center and moving toward the pain of another. One of the best examples of this kind of transformation is parenthood. Think about a mother carrying a child in her womb. She sacrifices her own body to nourish and protect that life. Even when she's sick, she refuses to take certain medications—because her child's well-being comes first. She becomes a new kind of person—one who instinctively places another's needs above her own.

Did you know that the Hebrew word for mercy—*rahamim*—comes from the root *rehem*, which means womb? To be merciful is to have the heart of a mother. A mother doesn't love her child because the child deserves it; her love is not conditional, nor is it something the child must earn. Mercy, then, doesn't measure worthiness; it chooses compassion, even when it isn't earned.

And yet, that's not how the world often works, is it? Mercy so often takes a back seat to judgment. We like to sort people into categories: right and wrong, worthy and unworthy, good and bad. We cling to our version of truth, convinced that our judgment is fair and final. But here's the challenge—what if mercy means loosening our grip on our own certainty?

There's a famous story from Jewish tradition. When God was creating humanity, the angels argued. The Angel of Mercy said, "God, create humans! They will show kindness." But the Angel of Truth objected, "Don't do it! Humans will be full of lies." The Angel of Justice said, "Create them! They will do what is right." But the Angel of Peace protested, "No! Humans will be full of conflict."

After hearing them all, do you know what God did? God took the Angel of Truth—and threw it down to the earth. One rabbi explained this, saying "Why did God throw down truth, but not peace? After all, peace, too, said that humanity should not be created. Rather, one should know that when one throws away truth, peace results." If we cling too tightly to our own perspective, we become blind to everything else. But when we let go of our certainty and partial truth and step into another's experience, mercy takes root and peace follows.

The Strength to Be Merciful

If we want to live in a world where mercy overcomes cruelty, it starts with us. It starts with how we speak, how we treat others, and how we teach our children to see the dignity in every human being. Of course, living a merciful life is not something we can do on our own. That's why we need prayer. In the 1960s, a group of pastors formed an interracial Christian community in Georgia called Koinonia Farm—the birthplace of Habitat for Humanity. They lived together, worked together, and worshiped together—Black and white, side by side. In return, they were persecuted. Their homes were bombed. They were threatened. Yet, despite the danger, they remained steadfast.

One day, a visiting pastor asked the community leader, “What is your secret? Where do you find the strength to keep going?” The leader led him to a small wooden room with nothing but a desk, a Bible, and a candle. “This,” he said, “is the source of our strength.”

We cannot be merciful without first receiving God’s mercy. So may we answer God's invitation and become people of mercy. To do that, I encourage you to create a sacred space—a place where you can meet with God in prayer. Because when we come before God, our empty cups are filled. And when mercy overflows, we don’t just survive—we become a source of life for others. So let’s ask God today: “Lord, fill my cup with grace, so that I may pour out mercy into the world.”

Amen.