

Why We Believe What We Believe 2

The Mercy & Compassion of God

(preached 11/6/22)

Please turn to *Ezekiel 11:19*.

Sermon #1: 4 Factors & Justice/Morality.

- Belief and unbelief take place in the heart—it's only when the heart believes that we do.
- Good theology that our minds agree with doesn't qualify as belief—if our hearts don't buy it, then we don't either.
- Ex: we know God commands us to forgive, but our hearts won't let us. It's still hurt and angry and therefore retains the sin of the offending person, holding it against them.
- 4 factors of why believe in something, why we will refuse to believe something, or why will STOP believing something:
- JUSTICE/MORALITY or lack thereof.
- COMPASSION/MERCY or lack thereof.
- PROVISION/PROTECTION or lack thereof.
- MULTIPLE SOURCES saying the same thing or lack thereof.
- Last week we covered Justice/Morality.
- When we attach justice and morality (or lack thereof) to something we believe, which we do, we become far more zealous about it and less likely to change our minds.
- Ex: a PETA person believes the killing of animals is immoral and the mere thought of it defiles their conscience.
- Not only will they not eat meat, but will judge those who do as being less moral.
- ***Neither facts nor verses of the Bible will matter to someone whose attached justice/morality to what they believe or refuse to believe in. (Cognitive Dissonance).***
- All of humanity does this: both believers and unbelievers! It's part of being made in God's image.
- How can we come to believe in what's true then?
- Our first step is to crucify our personal sense of justice/morality and take on God's.
- To sacrifice the morality & justice of our political party, and acknowledge that only God is just.
- Our hearts must realize that God is just, good, holy, and righteous all the time.
- Whether Satan is sifting us as wheat like he did to Job, or whether the Lord is blessing our socks off God is still good.
- Have we been guilty of comparing our personal sense of what's right with God's? We would have healed that person, spared that person the accident they were in, etc.
- For whatever reason, God didn't heal or spare them...and we don't know why.
- Our hearts will tempt us to malign God's holy character and exalt our own sense of righteousness above His.
- We must repent of such pride, and our hearts must believe that God is always just and moral.

FOLLOW UP. On the way home last week, my son Jordan asked me if everything that takes place here on earth is God's justice and the answer is no. Please remember the sermon series "Nature, Nurture, & Choice" where we covered that some bad things are the result of nature having fell with Adam. Other things are bad choices we make (and others make) whether ignoring God or rebelling against Him, and the consequences that follow. In other words, not every bad thing that happens is God's justice.

TODAY we address is the *second* of the 4 factors that cause us to believe, refuse to believe, or stop believing in something.

We're more likely to believe in something when we see compassion and mercy within it.

WE'RE MORE LIKELY TO REFUSE TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING, OR STOP BELIEVING IN SOMETHING ELSE, WHEN WE SEE A LACK OF COMPASSION AND MERCY WITHIN IT.

This "something" can be of God or the Devil, good or evil, truth or falsehood.

When we attach compassion and mercy to something, our feelings toward that something will burn hot and we'll literally believe in it with our whole heart.

WHEN WE SEE A LACK OF COMPASSION AND MERCY WE WILL REJECT SOMETHING ZEALOUSLY AND FIGHT AGAINST IT, BELIEVING IT EVIL AND WRONG WHETHER IT IS OR NOT.

When we attach compassion and mercy to our beliefs, any information, data, or doctrine that doesn't agree with what we do, we will reject.

We will do so even if the Bible or facts say differently.

GO'S LAW. Unbelievers & Christians struggle with God's commandments for just this reason. We see the list of "thou shalts" and "thou shalt not's" and we PERCEIVE a lack of compassion and mercy.

Leviticus 20:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”

THE DEATH PENALTY?! While we admit that adultery is a sin let's be honest: how many of us scratch our heads and wonder why God decided that the penalty was death. Again I say: our HEARTS cry out and say “this is too harsh, where is the mercy and compassion?!” Our hearts cannot reconcile hearing the Apostle John say that “God so loved the world” and reading verses like these.

There ARE answers to the moral dilemmas we find ourselves in and the gateway to believing that God has provided both justice and mercy is through our hearts. To attach God's justice and compassion rather than ours.

ADULTERY REPRESENTS.... In the recently “Marriage” sermon series I taught you what adultery truly represents, correct? Why it's a sin that God takes seriously? Adultery represents a person or people who reject God and both have an affair and move in with the Devil. God gives eternal life and if we stick with Him, we inherit the same. What do you think happens to someone who leaves him and shacks up with Satan? Will they receive life or death? Where will they exist for all eternity?

THE FLOOD. What about the Genesis 6 Flood that killed everyone on the planet except Noah & his family? Couldn't God have given the unbelievers at the time another chance or longer to repent and see the truth? Couldn't He have come up with some other punishment that wasn't so severe?

NEPHILIM. The truth is Noah & his family were the only ones left on earth that were 100% human. Everyone else were infected with Nephilim DNA, were completely corrupted beyond redemption, and were taking over the earth. If God hadn't sent the Flood, there would be no human or animal life in the present. It's all there in Genesis 6 and explains the strange verse that these beings were ONLY evil in their thoughts, words, and actions.

GOING TO HELL? Jesus said there were some who are going to Hell, and once again our hearts see the lack of mercy and compassion. It asks questions like “couldn't a loving God come up with something else? Can't He Save them and let them go to Heaven?”

He did come up with something, the ultimate act of compassion and most merciful solution ever: His Name was Jesus Christ. He came down here as one of us, subjecting Himself to His own creations. For all the good He did and said, He was rejected, despised, betrayed, and shamed by us. We crucified the Lord the Glory, the only Son of God, yet even His blood we helped shed Saved us and granted us the forgiveness of sin.

How does it get more merciful and compassionate than that?

TRUE STORY. Would you like to know what happened between last week's sermon and today? I received a message from a lady who broke my heart. She reminded me that, when she came to the tree farm last December, her grown daughter had just passed away 2 weeks before. Her and her husband were devastated and were trying to get through the Christmas season. They'd come to get a tree because they knew their daughter would have wanted them to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

UPDATE. Her update was even worse. In April of this year her husband suffered a massive stroke and died unexpectedly...and then just a month later a dear friend who'd been there for her through her both her daughter's and husband's death, died suddenly.

LOSE HOPE? With all this in mind, would it be understandable for this poor lady to see a lack of compassion and mercy on God's part? How about a lack of justice and morality? Would it be reasonable to say that she might have gotten angry with God, said He was unfair, and should have been kinder? Maybe even stopped talking to Him, going to church, or lose some of her hope and faith?

STARTED MINISTRY. Yet that wasn't and isn't her response to 3 tragedies in 6 months. Instead, she felt God leading her to start a small group in her church where she can minister God's mercy and compassion to others who are going through grief and bereavement. She refused to listen to the voice inside her, like that of Job's wife, telling her to curse God and die. Instead she submitted herself to the Holy Spirit and is now a conductor of His love for others.

When our hearts PERCEIVE a lack of mercy and compassion within the Lord, what can happen is the following:

- An Unbeliever refuses to hear the Gospel and receive Christ because they perceive a lack of compassion within God—both His words and actions.
- A person clings to a human institution, government, party, or philosophy because they perceive the presence of compassion and mercy. ***These things become their gods***. We can also do this with family.
- A Believer can begin to doubt and even reject and/or deconstruct God and His Word for the same reason, and begin to believe things that are patently false (deception).
- They can do so to the point of blasphemy: saying that God approves of these deceptions.

QUESTION. Is the Lord merciful and compassionate? You said “yes” and again: thank you for giving the doctrinally correct answer.

The real questions are...

- Do our hearts truly believe God is merciful and compassionate ALL the time?
- Do we believe He's more of both than we are?
- Or do we believe our love on par with His?

10 COMMANDMENTS. Did you know that, right after giving Moses the 2 stone tablets with the 10 commandments on them said the following:

Exodus 34:5-7 (ESV)

⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty,"

God is both perfectly merciful and completely just at the same time, and unlike us, it's never a compromise with Him.

CROSS JORDAN. When about to cross over the Jordan into the PM, God said this:

Deuteronomy 4:29-31 (ESV)

²⁹ But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.

³⁰ When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice.

³¹ For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

Verse 30: when we're in trouble we go back to God. Whether its trouble started by us or someone else.

Verse 31: the Lord will be merciful.

Psalm 86:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Psalm 103:6-13 (ESV)

⁶ The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹ He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

God's justice is everywhere in Scripture and, as I shared last week, we must attach it (and not our own) to what we believe. When we do, we will be zealous for the truths we've gleaned from reading our Bibles and listening to sermons.

God's mercy is also everywhere in the Bible and is married to His justice. With us, the two are often in conflict aren't they? Yet with God they never are. Never! They're never contradictory with Him and one doesn't overshadow or take away from the other. They work like a harmonious marriage, complimenting each other.

GOD'S JUSTICE brings a person to the knowledge that they've sinned against Him, aren't good, aren't righteous, and not holy. That they're in really big trouble. God's morality brings a person to the knowledge that they need saving and therefore a Savior Who is:

- Moral enough to have not sinned
- Merciful enough to want to get people out of that pit.
- Powerful enough to actually pull it off.

God's Mercy shows us that He wants eternal life for us, longs to forgive, and desires to give us His Kingdom. That His heart is for us and not against us at all! It shows us that we are His kids.

God's compassion shows us the way to all these things, and that Way is Christ Jesus. He wants to give everything to us, starting with Himself. He wants a loving Father-Child relationship for all of eternity.

THE JUSTICE AND MORALITY OF GOD BRINGS US TO OUR KNEES, AND THE MERCY AND COMPASSION OF GOD SETS US BACK ON OUR FEET.

Look at the verses in Psalm 103, focusing on verse 10:

¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

TRUE FOR ME! Every day I know this is true for me! If He really responded to all my sins with justice, I would be in trouble! It's not that His mercy outweighs His justice: it's that Jesus satisfied justice on my behalf and now what I get is MERCY!!!

Look at verse 13: we are now His kids. I've said this before but it bears repeating: justice is for the unbeliever, character building is for God's kids. If a criminal is guilty of a crime and brought before a judge, the judge only looks at the law and passes sentence. If the judge's son is brought before Him, the judge's heart is full of love and says "I don't want my kid to grow up to be a bad apple, so I'll discipline him to refine his character...and I'll help him through this."

Joel 2:12-13 (ESV)

¹² "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

Verse 12: God's justice brings us to a place of humility and repentance...where we see our NEED FOR MERCY.

Verse 13: God gives His mercy and "changes His mind" when it comes to punishment.

SAVED. On the day you and I received Jesus as Savior, God "relented" of the "disaster" we had coming and has been treating us like His sons and daughters ever since. That sounds like amazing compassion and mercy to me!

Micah 7:18-19 (ESV)

¹⁸ Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

INTO THE SEA. Instead of an "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" the Lord takes our sins and throws them into the depths of the sea! He stomps on them (not us!) with His mighty heel to show His victory over our trespass. What happens to us? We are PARDONED (verse 18). What motives this forgiveness? His compassion!

JESUS APPEARS. When Jesus finally appeared, Israel was deep in sin and iniquity. Their spiritual leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, were nothing more than whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones. They were barring entrance into God's Kingdom and heaping heavy burdens upon the people. Jesus could have come here as a conquering King bringing fiery wrath upon everyone...but instead this is what happened:

Matthew 9:35-36(ESV)

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Verse 35: Jesus brought good news into a bad environment. He bypassed the priests and religious leaders and went straight to the people. He healed them, giving them a piece of the Kingdom to come. What motivated all this?

Verse 36: compassion. Despite the fact they'd all dug themselves into pits and fallen away, Jesus's heart was moved with compassion.

We have a heart because we're made in the image of God—which means that God also has a heart.

He has a heart that cries out for justice.

He has a heart full of mercy and compassion for people.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

These 2 verses, like so many others, show us the perfect marriage in God of justice and mercy.

His compassion enables and empowers us to be just!

Saints of God, it's with HIS compassion that we must discern what is true. Our own or that of our political party will lead us down the wrong path, perhaps even to the point of ignoring, disagreeing with, or even deconstructing/rejecting what's written in the Scriptures.

Since we're going to attach mercy and compassion to what we believe, it needs to be God's. Not ours, not someone else's.

That starts with knowing that God's mercy and compassion are pure and not compromised in any way. That His is above ours and always will be. Let's crucify our version of it and take on His, knowing that the Lord has already worked His love into what He's said and done.