



THE POINT

MERCY HERE, THERE & EVERYWHERE

PROBLEM:

Hurt bleeds into more hurt. We don't know what to do with our own pain, let alone have the capacity to care about others pain. Pain is pervasive.

SOLUTION:

Jesus desires mercy for all people. He came that no one would perish. Want Mercy. Mercy for yourself. For Jesus to be merciful. For others to want mercy.

APPLICATION:

Does my heart beat at the rhythm of Jesus's? Do I want mercy? Do I want Jesus to be merciful? Do I want others to want mercy?

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 19:1-10 NIV

LEADER WIN

We are hurt people. We know hurt people. We all hurt each other. Pain is vicious - spreading from heart to heart.

While hurt is pervasive so should mercy be. Every place Jesus went he was moved to be merciful to everyone. When Jesus saw the pain around him his heart broke. It led him to passionately become incarnate and solve the problem. He died for us so we could live a new life. One where pain eventually is no more.

In this series our goal is to help the students discover, experience and desire to share the mercy of Jesus. Mercy is needed here, there and everywhere.

Two things move my heart as a pastor, people hurting and hurting people encountering the heart of God. Sadly, every time we blink we see more pain. When our eyes are glazing upon our reflection in the mirror we encounter personal pain. When we make that awkward eye contact with a stranger, we see pain. Hurt is found here, there, and everywhere.

Pain is unfair. What caused pain cannot just go away. When I disappoint myself, fall short or fail at something, I cannot go back and redo it. We don't get redos. We get retries. The same is true for pain others cause us. Restitution enables people to pay up later but they can never give back the nonmonetary losses we experienced. Time, peace, and compounding progression are lost forever.

Pain is vicious. What do hurt people do? Hurt people. Pain has a way of cycling around. You hurt me, I hurt you, we hurt others, others hurt us, and on and on it goes. Where does it stop?

Given the pervasive evil all around us, how can we reconcile the existence of a loving/merciful God? Where is Jesus and what is he doing when we experience hurt? As Christians, what should we be doing with the hurt we see (in ourselves and others)? In this series we answer these questions.

WEEK 1 — **The Heart Beat of Jesus.** Jesus consistently found himself close to those who were hurting. In Luke 19 we find such a moment. Everything Zacchaeus has done has distanced himself from society and society has done everything possible to distance themselves from him in return. He is a tax collector – chief one in fact. Tax collectors stole from the people in the first century. All of society despised and rejected him. Jesus is traveling through Israel and had to pass through Jericho where Zacchaeus lived. Jesus had one goal, get through Jericho so he could get to his intended destination. What happens? Jesus stops and stays the evening in Jericho having dinner with this rejected sinner. Why did Jesus stop and stay with a hurting sinner when that wasn't his initial plan? Jesus said, "For the son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Showing mercy to the broken was Jesus' heart beat. It was why he came, what he did, and what he committed to do for all of humanity; here, there, and everywhere. "When He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36).

WEEK 2 — **Do I Want Mercy?** Zacchaeus is a unique case study. From Jesus' perspective, Jesus sees Zacchaeus accidentally. As we discussed last week, Jesus reveals his true heart beat by how he reacts to poor Zacchaeus. How did Jesus end up seeing Zacchaeus? This is where things get interesting. When we meet Zacchaeus, we are told he is both short in stature and repulsive to the larger crowd. For reasons we will theorize deeper in week 5, Zacchaeus is unable to see Jesus passing through because he has disabled himself from getting to a position to see Jesus. Despite all the disabling factors, Zacchaeus is determined to "See who Jesus is" (Luke 19:3). **Jesus sees Zacchaeus because Zacchaeus wants to see who Jesus is so bad** he runs ahead of the crowd and climbs a tree (ensuring the crowd cannot obstruct his view as they march down the street with Jesus). When Zacchaeus is seen by Jesus, he immediately welcomes Jesus to his house with gladness. Without prompting from Jesus or the crowd, Zacchaeus then declares Jesus his Lord and receives all God's mercy for him. Zacchaeus wanted the mercy of Jesus. By the end of the story, the characteristic that distinguished Zacchaeus from the rest of the crowd was his

desire for Jesus' mercy. Pain is overcome when we are ready for and desiring of God's mercy. Do you want it? How much?

- WEEK 3 — **God Was So Merciful to Lynsey Wood.** The most powerful and moving experience to encounter is someone realizing their potential through the eyes and perspective of Jesus and not their own pain. In week 3 we hear from Lynsey and how God has mercifully helped her begin a journey of overcoming deeply rooted and debilitating insecurities. She is still on this transformational journey of believing in herself the way Jesus believes in her but where God has taken her and sustained her thus far is nothing short of a miracle; and she gives God the glory.
- WEEK 4 — **Do I want Jesus to be Merciful?** There are 4-5 groups of people (or characters) in this story. Beyond Jesus and Zacchaeus, there are the disciples, the larger crowd of local citizens and tourists, and the religious leaders. In this story Luke does not distinguish who is in the "all" and who is not in verse 7. People who knew Zacchaeus or understood the role he had would have been shocked to see Jesus take unprecedented time with Zacchaeus. None of this crowd gave space for Zacchaeus to see Jesus at the outset. In this "all" are people who also want to see Jesus and many of whom who want Jesus' mercy for themselves, but when they see Jesus interact with Zacchaeus they are flabbergasted, disturbed and angered. "He has gone out to be the guest of a sinner?!" We see they want Jesus to be merciful but not universally merciful. Do we want Jesus to be merciful? Are there people we would expect or desire Jesus not show mercy to?
- WEEK 5 — **Do I Want Others to Want Mercy?** Everyone is part of the crowd. Luke writes, "All the people saw this and began to mutter" (Luke 19:7). The crowd shares a few things in common with Zacchaeus: they want to see who Jesus is and they want mercy for themselves (a common theme in the gospel accounts). Where they sadly fall short is in their desire for Jesus to be merciful. Why? Because they don't desire that Zacchaeus; and other sinners like him, to want mercy. It was obvious. Luke doesn't distinguish between people in the crowd. Their talk and behavior makes abundantly clear their hearts intent. They didn't want for the sinner what Jesus wanted for the sinner. Jesus wanted the sinner to want mercy – so he gave him every opportunity. The crowd prevented Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus, as far as they could. When he does get to see Jesus they express their disdain. Is there a difference between what we want for others and what Jesus wants for others? Jesus commanded, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35). Our heart should break open for those who are broken. Is your heart's desire that others would want God's mercy? Do you celebrate when they do? Do you work to help people see Jesus?