



Potomac Hills

Community Church, PCA

RELEVANT • RELATIONAL • REAL

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October 28, 2001

The Joy of Mercy

“Revealed Grace” - a series from Luke
Luke 10:25-37

INTRODUCTION: What the World Looks like^{1 2}

Place	People	Food	Clothes	Housing	Wealth
USA	4 (6%)	2 loaves	6 shirts	piano	24 baseballs
EUROPE	12 (21%)	1 loaf	2 shirts	12 blocks	6 baseballs
ASIA	34 (57%)	1- loaf	1 shirt	6 blocks	3 baseballs
S. AMERICA	5 (8%)	4 slices	.5 shirt	2 blocks	1 baseball
AFRICA	5 (8%)	2 slices	.3 shirt	1 block	1 golf ball
MUSLIMS	12 (20%)	1 slices	.2 shirt	1 small block	1 marble

If Earth's population was shrunk into a village of just 100 people -- with all the human ratios existing in the world still remaining -- what would this tiny, diverse village look like?

That's exactly what Phillip M. Harter, a medical doctor at the Stanford

¹ Population statistics adapted (simplified) from *Integrity*, the Electronic Newsletter of www.SoulBusiness.com, Dr. James S. Vuocolo, 3/5/01.

² “Identifying with the Developing World” is adapted from *Daybreaks*, the electronic newsletter of Rev. Galen Dalrymple, 7/20/01.

University School of Medicine, attempted to figure out.

This is what he found.

57 would be Asian

21 would be European

14 would be from the Western Hemisphere

8 would be African

52 would be female

48 would be male

70 would be nonwhite

30 would be white

70 would be non-Christian

30 would be Christian

89 would be heterosexual

11 would be homosexual

6 people would possess 59 percent of the entire world's wealth,
and all 6 would be from the United States.

80 would live in substandard housing

70 would be unable to read

50 would suffer from malnutrition

1 would be near death

1 would be pregnant

1 would have a college education

1 would own a computer

Think of it this way. If you live in a good home, have plenty to eat and can read, you are a member of a very select group.

And if you have a good house, food, can read and have a computer, you are among the very elite.

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness... you are more fortunate than the million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation... you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death...you are fortunate, more than three billion people in the world can't.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep...you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace...you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If you are able to read this message, you are more blessed than over four billion people in the world that cannot read at all.

What would it take for us as middle-class Americans to identify with the Developing world?

Calvin Miller described a trip he made to Calcutta that I thought was worth sharing. It will hopefully give us a better perspective on what life is like in most of the world. He described villages and cities where no one could imagine a credit card, and the phrase “Shop ‘til you drop” was as foreign as speaking Venusian.

He went on: *“In Calcutta, a lot of other materialist bumper stickers also disappeared. ‘I owe, I owe, so off to work I go’ was missing, as was ‘My child and my checks go to the university’. Strangely absent were questions like “How many square feet...” or “What’s your second car?”. We were told again and again not to compliment any object in the homes we visited because the Christians who lived there were apt to give it to us.*

“The editors of Leadership magazine suggested 9 rather drastic steps wealthy Westerners would have to take to truly identify with the developing world:

“First, take out the furniture: leave a few old blankets, a kitchen table, maybe a wooden chair. You’ve never had a bed, remember?

“Second, throw out your clothes. Each person in the family may keep the oldest suit or dress, a shirt or blouse. The head of the family has the only pair of shoes.

“Third, all kitchen appliances have vanished. Keep a box of matches, a small bag of flour, some sugar and salt, a handful of onions, a dish of dried beans. Rescue the moldy potatoes from the garbage can: those are tonight’s meal.

“Fourth, dismantle the bathroom, shut off the running water, take out the wiring and the lights and everything that runs by electricity.

“Fifth, take away the house and move the family into the tool shed.

“Sixth, no more postman, fireman, government services. The two-classroom school is three miles away, but only two of your seven children attend anyway, and they walk.

“Seventh, throw out your bankbooks, stock certificates, pension plans, insurance policies. You now have a cash hoard of \$5.

“Eighth, get out and start cultivating your three acres. Try hard to raise \$300 in cash crops because your landlord wants one-third and your moneylender 10 percent.

“Ninth, find some way for your children to bring in a little extra money so you have something to eat most days. But it won’t be enough to keep bodies healthy – so lop off 25 to 30 years of life.”

Rather sobering, isn’t it?

I don't share this to make us feel guilty for what God has given us, but to help us realize how fortunate we are and how much we have to be grateful for.

If God has given us abundance, He intends for us to use it to care for the needs of others.

And that brings us to today's passage, Luke 10:25-37.

Luke 10:25-37, *"One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking Him this question: "Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?"*

[26] Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"

[27] The man answered, " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' "

[28] "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

[29] The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

[30] Jesus replied with an illustration: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes and money, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

[31] "By chance a Jewish priest came along [PRESBYTERIAN PASTOR]; but when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. [32] A Temple assistant walked over [DEACON] and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

[33] "Then a despised Samaritan [OSAMA BIN LADEN] came along, and when he saw the man, he felt deep pity. [34] Kneeling beside him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. [35] The next day he handed the innkeeper two pieces of silver and told him to take care of the man. 'If his bill runs higher than that,' he said, 'I'll pay the difference the next time I am here.'

[36] "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

[37] The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?³

The question is asked by a lawyer trying more to settle an uneasy conscience than to settle a debate. He finds the answer to his question in the most unexpected of places – on a dusty road leading out of Jerusalem.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho slopes steadily downward through a

³ The exposition of the text has been adapted from Moments with the Savior by Ken Gire, pages 198-204.

wilderness of rocks and ravines. The road snakes through these hills for seventeen miles, coming perilously close to steep ravines. And in the twists and turns of that road hide hardened criminals, lying in wait for the unsuspecting to come by. And because of that, the road has earned the title of “The Way of Blood.”

And down that road comes a tired priest. The robbers recognize him to be a religious man from the clothes he wears, and so they let him pass by. Some things are sacred, even to criminals. Besides, priests never carry anything of value anyway.

The priest has just finished eight days of service at the temple. From morning till night he has served there, instructing people in the straight and narrow ways of the law. For the times they have strayed, he has made intercession ... burning incense ... saying prayers ... offering sacrifices.

The days have been long and tiresome with tedious attention to detail given to everything from trying legal cases to trimming the wicks of the oil lamps in the temple. But now he is off duty and walking home to Jericho, the lush, worldly suburb of the holy city.

He is reciting the Psalms to himself, but the graceful rhythms of Hebrew poetry are jarred to a stop by the moans coming from the roadside. There lies a clump of naked flesh. The Priest squints ... it looks like a Jew ... hard to tell, what with all that blood on the guy.

The Law says that if you see your brother’s donkey fall down by the way, you should not hide yourself from it but should help it up. How much more, then, should you help if your brother himself has fallen?

But that’s not the portion of the Law that comes to the priest’s mind. He thinks of the passage which states that anybody who touches a dead person shall be rendered unclean for seven days. The Priest reasons to himself, this guy’s just about dead now. If I stop and help him, he’s going to die in my arms. Think of the elaborate ritual he would have to go through to purify himself, and quite frankly, he’s had enough of rituals for one week.

Besides, if he’s rendered unclean, that would interfere with his religious duties at the synagogue in Jericho and he’s slated to teach next week.

So instead of risking defilement, the priest turns and walks away.

The next one down the road is a Levite. Levites assist the Priests in the temple worship. And he too is just off work and anxious to get home. He’s moving quickly. He needs to be in Jericho by noon, in time for the city council meeting where he’s been asked to give the opening invocation. It’s quite an honor and an important step in his career. It’ll give him greater visibility and a wider circle of influence. Besides, it’s a good chance to rub shoulders with the council members and the top merchants in town. Good givers ... those merchants. And

they know how to treat their holy men. Once you get a little recognition, that is. And once you get in with the right people.

Yep, this is a great opportunity. His steps grow brisk.

But his stride is broken as the bend in the road reveals this man who's been beaten by robbers. He looks at the man and then at the angle of the sun. He has to be in Jericho by noon. He has a commitment. He's given them his word. Surely somebody will come along in a minute or two, as he picks up the pace and crosses over to the other side of the road.

Then a Samaritan comes riding his donkey down the dusty stretch of road. He's been in Jerusalem on business, and he has business in Jericho before he gets to head home. Business is hard here. Everyone knows he's a Samaritan and they all look at him with suspicion. You'd think he was a terrorist or something.

The business climate here is not good. The Jews hate the Samaritans. They won't let them in their homes. And they would no more eat at a Samaritan's table than they would at a pig's trough. The hatred is so intense that the Jews publicly curse them in the synagogue, asking God to exclude them from eternal life.

The Samaritan tries to shake off the rude treatment, having seen his own people treat Jews just as badly. And as he rounds the bend in the road, he sees the wounded man. His heart compels him to stop. It is so full of compassion and mercy that it has no room for questions. The man's a Jew, but the Samaritan doesn't care. He's in great need, and as far as the Samaritan is concerned, that's all that matters.

So he takes out wine and oil and cleanses the man's wounds. He tears small strips from his robe to bind up the wounds and stop the bleeding. Carefully, he shoulders the man onto the donkey and walks him to the town. They come to the inn, where he could drop the man off and move along. But he stays the night, caring for this stranger for those first, critical 24 hours. Washing his wounds. Changing his bandages. Giving him water.

He has to leave the next day, but the wounded man is too hurt to travel. So the Samaritan gives the innkeeper two silver coins (about two days wages). He not only goes out on a financial limb for this man, but he goes into debt, obligating himself for any additional expenses.

As far as we know, the Samaritan did nothing for this man's soul.

He uttered no prayers, quoted no verses, left no tracts.

All he did was to give the man the physical help he needed.

And that seemed to be enough.

At least it was enough in the eyes of the One who told the story.

In demonstrating what it means to be a good neighbor, the Samaritan defined the meaning of love. Love doesn't look away. Love doesn't walk away. Love

gets involved. Even when it's expensive and inconvenient.

When Jesus concludes the story, he asks the lawyer, "*Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?*"

The man almost chokes on the answer. He can't bring himself to say, "The Samaritan." All he can say is, "*The one who showed him mercy.*"

The Jews hated the Samaritans. They considered them to be religious apostates, heretical half-breeds. They were utterly despised.

Just a chapter earlier, in Luke 9, a Samaritan village refused to let Jesus enter. The disciples asked Jesus to call down fire from heaven on the village; after all, they're Samaritans.

So knowing that Jesus was a Jew and realizing His recent rejection by the Samaritans, you'd think he would have cast the Samaritan as the man who got beaten up, or as the robbers, or at least as one of the men who turned away.

But Jesus didn't do that.

He made the Samaritan the hero of the story.

The hero.

Now, what does this have to do with missions?

First, who are the ones who should be showing mercy?

The Priests, the Levites, the Lawyers, the Jews.

Today you could say the Pastors, the Deacons, the Elders, the church.

Who did show mercy?

The Samaritan.

Today you could say the outcasts, the outsiders, the hated, the Muslims, the anything other than what is here.

But Jesus has turned the tables.

Once again, He has used the people who are supposed to be the ones we're reaching out to, as the model for how to reach out.

And to be honest, not a lot has changed.

Hamas is a Palestinian terrorist group.

But not to the Palestinians.

You know why?

Because Hamas, a name we associate with suicide bombers, runs a large number of schools, hospitals, and food distribution centers among the Palestinians. And it's hard to call them terrorists, even if they are, when they are educating your kids, providing medical care for your sick wife, and giving you the food to feed your family. They have mastered the art of mercy in this part of the world, even more than the Christians and Jews.

And we want to send missionaries to them

And they have no idea why.

Inside that part of the world, actions of mercy and grace are going to have to precede words of mercy and grace.

And it's not going to be easy.

But some are doing it ... or at least trying.

Just this morning (Friday), I received this email letter from Heather Mercer, one of the missionaries being held by the Taliban in Afghanistan. It passed from her father to friends to Joan Hunter to me. We support her and pray regularly for her. I hope you will too. I've communicated several times with her pastor from Texas who is now ministering to her family in Pakistan.

Listen to this 24-year-old woman who has been held hostage in Afghanistan for almost 3 months now.

Her crime was feeding the poor in that country in Christ's name.

22 Oct.

Dear Potomac Hills, (David Silvernail)

Greetings from Kabul!

I do hope that this letter reaches you over the many miles it has to travel. Since my imprisonment, I have thought much about you and the brief time I shared with you before my departure. I was so thankful, and I am so grateful, for all the kindness, blessing, and support you extended to me. I was so encouraged by what is happening among you!

In this time I am so glad to know that you and many others are remembering us. We so desperately need your strength and faith as we walk through [this] trying time. The six ladies (myself included), the two men are kept elsewhere, meet daily in the morning hours and again in the evening to call out to the One who knows no turning. We sing, read, and pray and call out for grace for each new day. Though moments come when we don't know how to carry on, our Daddy runs in, picks us up, and again speaks a word of life. Please continue to call out with us for the miracles we and this nation so desperately need! We're so thankful that we serve One in the business of performing such. When this is all said and done, my great desire is that God would be more honored and loved and this broken nation restored. The common people of this nation are so precious, so amazing! I believe the lonely women of this country are the true heroes. I've learned so much from them and their stories.

May grace, peace, and love continue to be for you all a standard which leads you as you carry on in Him. May Paul's words to Colossians one, nine through twelve bless you and be fulfilled to the deepest measure in your midst.

Thank you for standing with us! We need you with us!

Until we meet again ... in love and peace, Heather Mercer

Colossians 1:9-12 says, "*So we have continued praying for you ever since we first*

*heard about you. We ask God to give you a complete understanding of what He wants to do in your lives, and we ask Him to make you wise with spiritual wisdom. [10] Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, **and you will continually do good, kind things for others.** All the while, you will learn to know God better and better.*

[11] We also pray that you will be strengthened with His glorious power so that you will have all the patience and endurance you need. May you be filled with joy, [12] always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light.”

Jesus was a man who was the same on the outside as He was on the inside.

Jesus saw through the eyes of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus went to the people who were lost in the darkness, so can we.

Jesus saw through the eyes of Scripture.

Jesus did and taught simply what the Bible said, so can we.

Jesus saw through the eyes of Mercy.

When Jesus saw a need He could meet, He met it, so can we.

Jesus saw through the eyes of Simplicity.

Jesus usually operated in a low-key, natural manner, so can we.

Jesus saw through the eyes of Integrity.

When Jesus talked with people, He was never manipulative.

He meant what He said and said what He meant, so can we.

Jesus saw through the eyes of His culture.

Jesus helped others see how the Gospel was relevant to everyday life. He spoke in the language of His day so people could understand Him, so can we.

Jesus saw through the eyes of Reality.

Jesus taught others on a rational, practical level, and yet He always recognized the supernatural hand of God at work around Him, so can we.

Jesus' ministry is the model for missions.⁴

In John 3:1-16, Jesus used His encounter with Nicodemus as an opportunity to state clearly that He was sent into the world, **because God loved the world.**

In John 4:4-42, Jesus **witnessed to a Samaritan woman**, which led her and many other Samaritans to believe in Him.

In Matthew 8:5-13, Jesus healed the servant of **the Roman Centurion**, praising the Romans for his faith, and commenting that **many would “come from east and west”** to dine with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In Matthew 15:21-28, Jesus healed the daughter of **a Canaanite woman.**

In Mark 13:10, Jesus gives one condition that must be met before His return:

⁴ Passages and text about the Great Commission are adapted from the *Missions Education Handbook*, ACMC, page 7.

“And the Gospel must first be preached to all nations.”

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave us **The Great Commission!**

In the Great Commission, Jesus turned the tables on Israel and the early church:

They expected Jesus to set up an *earthly kingdom*.

BUT He offered them entry into a *spiritual kingdom*.

They expected Jesus to *use His power* to establish the kingdom.

BUT He promised *them power* to extend the kingdom.

They anticipated that the nations would *stream to Israel* to worship God.

BUT He commissioned them to *go to the nations* with the Gospel, and disciple them.

They wanted Jesus to do the work *by Himself*.

BUT He told them that He would do His work *through and with them*.

“The Great Commission, in fact, is not one command, but a composite commission found in all four Gospels and Acts. None of these writers gave it in its entirety, but they beautifully supplement each other.

In Matthew 28:18-20, the authority, the all-inclusive goal, and the time-extension of the work are stressed.

In Mark 16:15-16, the urgency, the method, and the personal responsibility are stressed.

In Luke 24:44-49, the foundation, the forgiveness of sins, the universality, and the personal responsibility are emphasized.

In John 20:21-23, the spiritual equipment and the spiritual nature of the work are highlighted.

Finally, in Acts 1:8, the risen Savior and the power of the Holy Spirit are shown.

This Great Commission was spoken to the Apostles as representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ and as such involves the whole realm of Christianity. All Christians are commanded to participate in completing this unfinished task.

If you consider yourself a follower of Christ, then you’ve experienced God reaching down to you in His Grace and mercy.

Once again Luke wants us to see that the Jesus story is not only about Him, but also about us. These texts **reveal** God at work; and show us how God **reveals His power** in order to call people who sometimes refuse to love our neighbor ... to “Come, be My disciple.”

God takes people who are “outsiders,” **and who can’t get in on their own**, and makes them “insiders” ... people who are involved **in a relationship** with the God of the universe. People who are called to live a life that looks to God because He has **poured out His grace** on those of us who realize that, apart from Christ,

we're the lepers and paralytics and possessed and dead people and the lowly and the least and the weak, and even though we may look like Priests and Levites we're not what we **too often** pretend to be.

In fact, our words and actions **far** too often are flat disobedient.

Because we not only don't love our neighbor, we hate him.

But Jesus comes to us anyway, and He touches us, and teaches us, and heals us, and saves us. And that's **grace**, because we're getting what we don't deserve.

Luke brings us that same essential message of grace over and over again.

We see it in Jesus' teaching.

We see it in Jesus' healing.

We see it when He casts out demons.

We see it when He calls undeserving people.

God set His love on us before the foundation of the world.

He sent His Son to live a perfect life and pour out His blood on the cross.

He called us and adopted us as His own children.

He is present with us by His Spirit.

He cleanses us, encourages us, and renews us every day.

He is preparing a home for us in the new heaven and new earth.

God's grace to sinners is the great over-riding them of Scripture.

Why? Because ...

It's all of grace from beginning to end.

And it's all of Grace because it's all of Christ.

Luke tells the story of how **Jesus revealed that grace**, died to provide it, rose again to bestow it, and will return to establish its presence over all of creation. The church **must show what such grace looks like** ... starting by bringing that grace to those among us who need Samaritans or Muslims to teach us how to love our neighbor.

And all who need that sometimes said, "Amen."