

God's Mercy and Love

In the book of Isaiah, chapter 6 starts with the prophet Isaiah's vision: "1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.' 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.' 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar."

Isaiah was chosen from planet Earth as the most righteous person among humans; and encountered God. In front of God, he cried out, "I am ruined! I am undone! For I am a man of unclean lips." In the presence of infinite holiness, one sin leads to the absolute death of the soul, and eternal separation from God. One sin caused the spiritual death of Adam and Eve, along with all of humanity. We were expelled from our blessed home and now live in the land of Nod, a land of exile filled with fear. God wanted us to come closer to Him, so He established the sacrificial system in the Old Testament.

Whenever the Israelites came to the temple, they had to bring an animal for sacrifice. Why was this necessary? God is infinitely holy, while we are sinful and finite. There was no way to bridge this gap. An infinitely holy God consumes all sinful things and beings that come near to Him. Humans cannot survive in the presence of a holy God without a certain system in place. Thus, the sacrificial system was implemented.

When an Israelite brought an animal to the temple to be sacrificed before a priest, he had to place his hand on the animal so that his sin would transfer to the animal through the priest's prayer. This process made the person temporarily free from sin and pure. The priest would then kill the animal in front of the person as a sacrifice to God. This act symbolized the person seeing themselves as dead before God. However, this ritual did not solve the overall problem of human sin, as it only temporarily removed the sins committed.

I am intentionally sharing this truth because I frequently encounter individuals within the UMC community who are not familiar with the sacrificial system. Some may question why God would require the death of an animal, and perceive God as cruel. In reality, this practice was motivated by God's love for humans, as it served as a symbolic bridge to connect people with God.

The Lamb of God, Jesus, sacrificed Himself to remove sin from our hearts, to transform our hearts so that sin may disappear, and to make us more like God. Through belief in Jesus, God sees us as righteous, just like Jesus. Scripture tells us that in Jesus, we sit at the right hand of the throne in the spirit (Ephesians 2:6). This love is incredibly unique and unchanging, something we cannot find in the world.

This truth humbles us and helps us understand who we are. To save us, God had to sacrifice His most precious Son, Jesus, who willingly gave His life for our eternal life. Will you accept this gift of life? I hope nobody will refuse.

God knew what the free will given to us for love would bring. Before the creation of human beings, there was a conversation between the triune God. The Father asked, "What if humans say no to our love? It means their eternal destruction and darkness. Eternal separation from us." Jesus answered, "I will give my life so that they may be restored to love." Before creation, Jesus had already become the Lamb slaughtered (Rev 13:8). We have sinned. We are constantly sinning without even realizing it. Only Jesus can free us from the sinful cycle of self, the prison of self.

Can you see your prison? The invisible prison that binds you? Jesus is there as a liberator. The Holy Spirit comes when you trust in Jesus. Our inner man revives and rejoices with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is present here and now in you and me.

Listen, **Ephesians 2, verses 4 to 7. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."**

Imagine the Father and Jesus standing a few feet apart, talking to each other, animated, smiling, laughing, and loving each other. And then imagine yourself right in the middle of them, feeling the vibration of their voices in your ears, feeling the same things in your heart that they're feeling in their hearts about each other. That's the love that you're included in. That's the space where fear can't live. Because in that place, we become confident that he will always be enough. And as we stand in first love, we hear the plans he has for us.

God wants us to live out the mercy and love given to us. God wants us to be God's messengers to people around us. We do not want to dilute or pollute that love given to us. Who are those around you? Who are they? In our modern world, one person dies by suicide every 11 minutes. We are sent to the world as God's ambassadors to give people hope of life. Mercy heals others; compassion heals others; grace heals others. Jesus healed us. God asks us to do the same.

Raul was a church custodian who lived in the southern part of Los Angeles. After losing his wife, he was overcome with grief. For a long time, he sat in the church and spent hours staring at the garden his wife had loved. Eventually, he decided to plant roses and turn it into a memorial garden for her. He also planted flowers, herbs, vegetables, and more.

One day, Raul discovered that several rosebushes had been destroyed. He had a feeling about who might be responsible. Despite feeling angry and afraid, he simply cleaned up the mess and fixed the damaged bushes. However, this scenario repeated itself over the next few days, leaving Raul unsure of what to do.

Feeling beside himself, Raul spent his days and nights watching over the garden, trying to catch the culprit. That's when he spotted a young boy entering his garden. The boy, who was ten years old, lived with his mother. His father had been absent for years, and his brother, a gang member, was currently in prison for murder. In a revenge attack, the boy's leg had been injured by a bullet, leaving him reliant on a cane.

Raul observed the boy as he reached the roses and used the cane aggressively on one of the bushes. When he saw Raul watching from the window, the boy appeared frightened at first, then defiantly glared before quickly disappearing. Raul initially thought about chasing after the boy to reprimand him or calling the police to report him skipping school.

However, he couldn't get the boy's eyes out of his mind; they reflected loneliness, anger, fear, hopelessness, and the likelihood of being drawn into a gang lifestyle. An idea sparked in Raul's mind. Later that day, he encountered the boy on his way home from school and initiated a conversation. The boy remained defensive, but Raul explained that he needed help protecting his garden from vandalism and caring for the plants. He offered to pay the boy, allow him to plant his own bushes, and teach him about gardening if he was interested.



The boy was skeptical at first, but Raul suggested they give it a try for one week. The boy only needed to watch over the garden and he would receive payment on Saturday morning. When Saturday came, the boy arrived and spent most of the day there. Raul taught him how to care for roses and even helped him plant his own rosebush. They picked tomatoes and herbs, and at the end of the day, they collected a bag of lemons

to make fresh lemonade. It was the best lemonade the boy had ever tasted. It was so delicious that he returned the following week and the week after that.

A person can be healed and restored through the mercy of others. Those who show mercy to their fellow human beings will be considered as daughters or sons of God.