



REAL MERCY

SERMON NOTES

Copyright © 2015 by Wesleyan Publishing House
Published by Wesleyan Publishing House
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250

These sermon notes are to be used in conjunction with *Real Mercy: Where Bible and Life Meet* by Thaddeus Barnum (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2015).

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce the contents of this publication for ministry or educational purposes. No portion of this publication may be reproduced for profit without prior written permission of the publisher.



About These Notes	4
Week 1. Blind and Begging Until . . .	5
Week 2. Forgiven and Forgiving?	7
Week 3. No Place Like Home!	9
Week 4. Bringing in the Sheaves	11
Week 5. Get Involved	13
Week 6. Love Bends Low	15
Week 7. When the Roof Came Apart	17



ABOUT THESE NOTES

Real Mercy by Thaddeus Barnum serves as the text for this interactive study. With clarity and utmost practicality, *Real Mercy* helps us understand what it means to live within God's mercy. Barnum shows us the heart of being a disciple as he relates seven models of godly mercy from the life of Jesus, connecting them to poignantly told stories from his own life.

Trust the Lord to enrich your life and the lives of your group members as you explore the meaning of real mercy in these sessions.



WEEK 1

BLIND AND BEGGING UNTIL . . .

Luke 18:35–43

INTRODUCTION



Sight is a precious gift to cherish and protect. Some people are born blind, but others are blind due to cataracts, stroke, glaucoma, injury, macular degeneration, infection, or some other cause. A blind person cannot see a sunrise or sunset, the beauty of a flower, or a loved one's face. Most blind people deserve our applause, though, because they get around quite well and have learned to perform a variety of tasks.

On his way to Jericho, Jesus encountered a blind man whose main role in life was to beg as travelers passed by. However, when he met Jesus, his life dramatically changed for the better.

SERMON OUTLINE



I. The Beggar's Plight (Luke 18:35)

A. Blind

His name was Bartimaeus. He was blind and helpless to change that condition. Similarly, all people are spiritually blind and helpless to change their condition. Satan has blinded their minds (2 Cor. 4:4), and they cannot escape from spiritual blindness unless Jesus frees them by giving them sight. He is the Light of the World, and He alone can bring light to a darkened soul.

B. Destitute

Bartimaeus depended upon handouts to sustain his day-by-day existence. Similarly in their spiritual darkness, unbelievers beg for something—anything—that might improve their lives. Some of them hope pleasure will make life more bearable, but the Bible says

the person who lives in pleasure is dead while he or she lives (1 Tim. 5:6). Nothing satisfies the human heart except the salvation Jesus gives. We cannot find true satisfaction by begging from pleasure, philosophy, religion, or career.

II. The Beggar's Plea (Luke 18:36–41)

A. For Mercy

Fortunately, blind Bartimaeus heard the hustle and bustle of a crowd passing by and asked what was going on (v. 36). “They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by” (v. 37). So he called out to Jesus for mercy. But he did not use the title “Jesus of Nazareth.” He called him “Jesus, Son of David,” a term that recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior (v. 38). When the crowd scolded him for his loud outburst, Bartimaeus cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (v. 39).

B. For Sight

Jesus did not ignore blind Bartimaeus's cry for mercy. Nor does He ignore any call for mercy today (Rom. 10:13). He stopped and ordered Bartimaeus to be brought to Him (Luke 18:40). When the blind man was in the presence of the Light of the World, mercy flooded the scene. Jesus asked, “What do you want Me to do for you?” (v. 41). “Lord, I want to regain my sight,” Bartimaeus answered (v. 41). It was a plea offered in faith, and Jesus would not disappoint Bartimaeus.

III. The Beggar's Physician (Luke 18:42–43)

A. Healed in Response to Faith

Jesus gave Bartimaeus sight (v. 42). Can you picture the scene? As his eyes received sight, the first face Bartimaeus saw was that of Jesus. There is healing for spiritual blindness for all who place their faith in Jesus as their Savior. Will you trust in Him?

B. Healed Immediately

Jesus healed Bartimaeus immediately (v. 43). When Jesus gives sight to the spiritually blind soul who trusts in Him, the healing is just as immediate. Jesus immediately pours out mercy as a transaction, not as a process. He immediately opens our blind eyes.

C. Healed Completely

Jesus healed Bartimaeus completely (v. 43). Bartimaeus followed Jesus. Having received spiritual sight from Jesus, we, too, should follow Him closely the rest of our days.

CONCLUSION



It has been said there are none so blind as those who refuse to see. Jesus offers sight to all who are spiritually blind, but how a person responds to the offer is voluntary. Some outright reject the offer. Some procrastinate. Others seize the opportunity immediately. If you are spiritually blind, will you accept Jesus' offer to open your eyes? Will you receive His gift of salvation and a brand-new life?



WEEK 2

FORGIVEN AND FORGIVING?

Colossians 3:13

INTRODUCTION



When you think of the disciple Peter, what characteristic first comes to mind? Isn't it one of the following: impetuous, rash, outspoken, or self-confident? It most likely is not patience, is it? Before the Lord radically changed Peter's heart, Peter seemed to be impatient with people and impatient with circumstances, quick to judge, and slow to forgive. On one occasion, he seemed to be very reluctant to forgive. He asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus' answer must have shocked Peter: "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:21–22).

Writing to the Colossians, the apostle Paul might have shocked readers who struggled with the need to forgive. He told the Colossians to bear "with one another and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (Col. 3:13).

Let's take to heart what Paul wrote about forgiveness.

SERMON OUTLINE



I. The Manner of Forgiveness (Col. 3:13)

A. Free of Grudges

A grudge is too heavy a load to carry, so we need to lay aside all grudges, and bear with each other, as Paul wrote in Colossians 3:13. Granted, some personalities and attitudes rub us the wrong way, but we probably would take issue if everyone were a carbon copy of

ourselves. Family members may say and do things that hurt other family members, but the family relationship usually ignores the hurts. After all, family love endures many wrongs. As God's children, we are family.

B. Free of Exceptions

As Christians we must resist the urge to retaliate. Instead, we are to embrace the grace to forgive. No matter what offense has struck us, we ought to forgive the offender.

II. The Model of Forgiveness (Col. 3:13)

Paul set the standard high by telling us to forgive as the Lord forgave us. The instruction leaves no loopholes or excuses. Partial forgiveness is not really forgiveness.

A. Undeserved

We did not deserve forgiveness. We deserved judgment. However, in love, mercy, and grace the Lord forgave us. A tax collector, despised by his countrymen, found acceptance with God when he confessed his unworthiness and need of mercy. Luke 18:13 reports that he beat his breast and cried out, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." Jesus said this repentant tax collector "went to his house justified [before God]" (v. 14).

B. Complete

King David called upon Israel to praise the Lord, "who pardons all your iniquities [sins]" (Ps. 103:3). Although our sins were heinous in God's sight, He offered His Son as the Lamb slain for our sins (Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet. 1:18–19). Whoever believes in the Lamb of God receives complete forgiveness. Jesus will never say He can forgive only a few of our sins or even most of our sins, because He paid the full price of our redemption on the cross and called out, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Following the model of forgiveness Jesus set, we must be merciful and forgive as the Lord forgave us—completely.

CONCLUSION



A bitter Christian complained to his pastor about another Christian who had offended him. "I will forgive him, but I will never have anything more to do with him."

The pastor replied, "Is that how the Lord forgave you? Did he say, 'I forgive you, but I will never have anything more to do with you'?"

Let's put aside bitter feelings and forgive as the Lord forgave us.



WEEK 3

NO PLACE LIKE HOME!

Luke 15:11–31

INTRODUCTION



Runaway sons and daughters find their way to cities where life on the streets is hard. Why do they run away from home? Some do so to escape an abusive parent. Some seek independence. Some grow tired of hearing their parents bicker. Whatever the reason, many runaway youth learn the hard way that home was actually a pretty good place. Luke 15 holds the story of a runaway son who learned the hard way that home was really where he should have stayed.

SERMON OUTLINE



I. A Rebellious Decision (Luke 15:11–12)

A. The Portrayal

The younger of two sons didn't want to live at home any longer, so he asked his father to give him his share of the inheritance, something that normally happened upon the death of a father. But the younger son was impatient to move away and taste the wild side of life.

B. The Parallel

Like the younger son, our first parents, Adam and Eve, were not content with life in the beautiful home God provided. They wanted a taste of what the Devil offered. So they turned away from God and partook of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:1–6).

II. A Ruined Life (Luke 15:13–19)

A. The Portrayal

The younger son squandered his inheritance in a far country, living wickedly. When a famine struck that country, he was impoverished and famished. He sank so low that he took a job feeding pigs. His life was in ruins.

B. The Parallel

Sin took a toll on the human race that had wandered far from God (Rom. 3:1–18). Sinners, spiritually impoverished and famished, look for satisfaction for their souls in sources that cannot satisfy them.

III. A Receptive Father (Luke 15:20–24)

A. The Portrayal

Fortunately, the rebellious son came to his senses, repented, and decided to return home. He found his father eagerly waiting for him, as he approached home. The father embraced and kissed his wayward son. Upon hearing his son's confession and request to become a hired hand, he clothed him with the best robe, put a ring on his finger, sandals on his feet, and ordered a celebration. He rejoiced that his lost son had been found; his dead son restored to life.

B. The Parallel

When repentant sinners come to God the Father, they find that the Father has been waiting for them. They receive robes of righteousness, and there is rejoicing in heaven that they have been found and given life (Isa. 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:21).

IV. A Self-Righteous Brother (Luke 15:25–32)

A. The Portrayal

Not everyone was happy that the father had welcomed the son so warmly and ordered a celebration. The prodigal's older brother resented all the attention given to his brother. He complained that nothing like that had been done for him even though he had slavishly served his father at home.

B. The Parallel

The Pharisees and teachers of the law were self-righteous. They objected strenuously to the attention Jesus gave sinners (Luke 15:1–2). They failed to accept the fact that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (19:10). How do we react to the love restored sinners receive?

CONCLUSION



John Newton, a slave trader, became a believer in 1748 during a violent storm at sea. Later, he wrote the words to the popular hymn “Amazing Grace.” This song was Newton's testimony, but it can easily apply to the son who learned the hard way that there is no place like home. One stanza announces, “I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.”



WEEK 4

BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

Ruth 2:19

INTRODUCTION



If you have watched sporting events on TV, you have probably seen a spectator hold up a large sign to the camera that reads “John 3:16.” I suppose we might debate the propriety of displaying that sign at a sporting event, but it seems certain that the sign’s owner wants others to know how to have everlasting life.

Do we have a similar zeal to make the gospel known?

One day when Ruth, a Moabite widow, returned home to her mother-in-law, Naomi, after a day of gathering sheaves of grain, Naomi asked her, “Where did you glean today?” That’s a question we might ask ourselves at the end of each day as well.

SERMON OUTLINE



I. Our Harvest Field (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:8)

Winning the lost to Jesus should be high, if not highest, on our list of priorities. After all, Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and He has commanded us to proclaim the gospel to the lost.

A. People

We must not confuse nations with the people in those nations. Although our response to the Great Commission may take us to a country in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, or South America, we cannot share the gospel with a geographical location. Rather, we share it with people in a given geographical location. When Jesus told his disciples to look on the

fields, He was directing their attention to people—villagers who were following the converted Samaritan woman from their town to Jesus. Essentially, our mission field is the people who cross our path on any given day.

B. Their Condition

Jesus described the fields—people—as ripe for harvest (John 4:35). Let's not be negative about our missionary assignment. Not everyone will believe, but scores of people today are feeling insecure about the future in a world in turmoil. They are ready to receive our witness, and many will trust in the Savior.

II. Our Urgent Task (John 4:35)

A. We Must Have Clear Vision

Jesus challenged His disciples to “look on the fields” (v. 35). Do we see the need of salvation that so many people have? Do we look at the grocery clerk, mailman, coworker, restaurant server, and others as people who need to hear about Jesus and His power to save? Do we have our eyes open to the potential harvest of souls?

B. We Must Reap Now

Procrastination is one of the Devil's most effective tools. If we procrastinate about reaching the lost, many will slip into eternity without Jesus while we delay. Only a lazy, foolish farmer would fail to reap a harvest when the crops are ripe.

III. Our Incentives (Ps. 126:5–6)

A. Joy Follows Tears

Struggles and disappointments may befall us when we endeavor to win the lost to Jesus, but joy will follow tears if we are faithful workers.

B. Sheaves Await Us

Sowing the seed of God's Word is a productive task. We do not know who will receive it with faith and spring to life in Christ, but God will accomplish His purposes. Some, perhaps many, will believe, and we will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with us (v. 6).

CONCLUSION



Naomi asked Ruth a significant question, “Where did you glean today?” Where have we gleaned today? Where will we glean every day until Jesus returns? Souls are waiting for our witness, and so is a harvest.



WEEK 5

GET INVOLVED

Luke 10:25–37

INTRODUCTION

A six-month pregnant worker at a coffee shop collapsed in the presence of two emergency medical technicians who were having lunch. However, instead of rendering assistance, the two EMTs told the ill woman's coworkers to call 9-1-1, and then they walked out of the coffee shop with their lunches. Later, in a hospital, the woman and her unborn child died.

Refusing to get involved is not infrequent, but it is usually heartless and cowardly. Jesus told the story of two religious leaders who ignored a wounded traveler's need for help, but a Samaritan came to the traveler's rescue. The Samaritan demonstrated mercy in action.

SERMON OUTLINE

I. Mercy Acts with Compassion (Luke 10:25–34)

An expert in the law asked Jesus a question designed to trick Him. He asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (v. 25). Would Jesus quote the law or reply that a person must believe in Him? In turn, He asked the expert to tell what was written in the law. The expert quoted the two Great Commandments, but when Jesus told him that he would live if he obeyed these two commandments, the expert asked, "And who is my neighbor?" (v. 29). Jesus responded with the story of the good Samaritan.

Although two religious leaders simply passed by the wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, the Samaritan got involved. He acted with compassion toward the needy man. He bandaged and soothed his wounds.

In *Real Mercy*, Thaddeus Barnum captures the scene:

Here it is—mercy! Mercy in its splendor and glory. Mercy in meticulous detail. Mercy for the lawyer to see—for us all to see. Just watch the Samaritan. He stopped his travels. He saw the man, felt compassion course through his veins, and did what mercy always does. He acted. He left his donkey, went to the man, assessed his condition, and began the work. He had everything he needed to treat him: oil and wine. It was the only medicine he had. Freely he poured—washing, cleansing, anointing—gently tending each wound and then wrapping it carefully in clean cloth before going to the next. One at a time. It took time. Mercy always takes time. (p. 231).

Are we moved with compassion to help the needy people who have fallen victim to various calamities, especially the calamity of being held in sin’s devastating grip? Do we simply pass by those people, or do we assist them in Jesus’ name?

II. Mercy Accepts a Cost (Luke 15:34–35)

Merciless people may refuse to get involved in a critical situation because it might cost them something to do so. It might cost them their level of comfort, their time, or even some of their money. But the Samaritan was merciful. He stepped out of his comfort zone and into the traveler’s desperate situation. He took time to care for him on the road and later as he took the victim to an inn where he cared for him. It also cost him money to get involved. His mercy led him to pay the innkeeper for the traveler’s housing and care. He paid the innkeeper two silver coins and promised to pay any extra expense upon his return to the inn.

How willing are we to step out of our comfort zone to show mercy? Are we willing to give time and money to minister mercifully to the wounded who line life’s highway?

III. Mercy Affirms the Second Greatest Commandment (Luke 10:36–37)

When Jesus asked the expert in the law which of the three—the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan—was neighbor to the victimized traveler, the expert could not bring himself to say the despised word *Samaritan*. He said, “The one who showed mercy toward him” (v. 37). “Go and do the same,” Jesus instructed the expert in the law (v. 37).

CONCLUSION



Jesus’ instructions to the expert in the law apply to us too. Let’s not simply look upon those who need mercy and then pass by. In the name of Jesus, let’s go to them, bind their wounds and soothe their hurts. Opportunities to extend mercy are many!



WEEK 6

LOVE BENDS LOW

John 13:1–17

INTRODUCTION



Do you have a good sense of direction, or do you depend on landmarks to guide you? Some individuals have such a poor sense of direction that they think they are going north when they are actually going south, or west when they think they are going east.

We may think God has a strange sense of direction. He tells us the way up is down. James put it this way, “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (James 4:10).

Jesus, who is our perfect example in everything, taught us what true humility is. On one occasion, He performed the role of a slave to serve His disciples.

SERMON OUTLINE



I. Jesus’ Example (John 13:1–5)

A. The Occasion

It happened in an upper room, where Jesus and His disciples were celebrating the Passover Feast (v. 1). Jesus knew His departure from the world was at hand, and He wanted to show the full extent of His love for His disciples (v. 1). Judas was ready to betray Jesus, but Jesus understood that the Father was in control and soon He would be returning to Him (vv. 2–3).

B. The Humble Act

Jesus removed His outer clothing, wrapped a towel around His waist, poured water into a basin, and began to wash His disciples’ feet, drying the wet feet with the towel. On page

260 of *Real Mercy*, Thaddeus Barnum comments, “Jesus did what should never be done. He broke our rules. We have a fixed social order. We have class distinctions. Those below us work to be like us. Those above us never stoop to come down to us. There are rules. There are ancient boundaries society demands we honor. Every society. And that night was no different. Jewish men never touched that towel. Not even Jewish men who were slaves. Women could. Children could. But it was generally reserved for the lowest class of people. Gentile slaves.”

II. Jesus’ Explanation (John 13:6–17)

A. Symbol of Spiritual Washing

Peter objected. He voiced the opinion that Jesus should never wash his feet (vv. 6–8). But when Jesus told him he could not have any part with Him unless He washed his feet, Peter changed his mind. He asked Jesus to give him a complete bath. However, Jesus explained that whoever has had a bath needs only a partial cleansing. He explained that all the disciples except Judas were clean. Barnum comments on page 287 of *Real Mercy*: “In verses 8 and 10, we see two aspects of foot-washing. First, it is a saving act. We must receive the Lord’s washing to have ‘part’ with Him. Second, it is a sanctifying act. As Christians, we grow in Christ by regular confession, repentance, and need for His daily cleansing in our lives (see 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1–2).”

B. Statement about Humble Service

After putting His outer clothes back on, Jesus returned to the table and asked the disciples if they understood what He had done. He explained that He, their teacher and Lord, had given them a lesson about serving. He commanded them to follow His example.

CONCLUSION



Have you notice that football sportswriters and broadcasters ascribe most of the glory to quarterbacks and running backs for victories? Not much, if any, glory goes to offensive linemen who protect their quarterback and make holes for a running back to run through. But we all know the linemen perform an extremely significant role.

Like football linemen, we ought to be willing to work hard and faithfully for the Lord without seeking any glory. Maybe we should keep a towel handy to remind us of that fact.



WEEK 7

WHEN THE ROOF CAME APART

Mark 2:1–12

INTRODUCTION



A violent summer storm blew the roof off a law firm’s building in Greenville, Tennessee, in 2015, but the lawyers couldn’t sue for damages. The disaster was not man-made. A roof came apart when Jesus was inside, but the incident *was* man-made, the damage was minimal, and the results were extremely positive. Mark’s gospel records the story.

SERMON OUTLINE



I. A Crowded House (Mark 2:1–2)

A. Because of Jesus’ Presence

After completing a ministry tour of Galilee, Jesus returned to Capernaum, where He healed many, including Peter’s mother-in-law. Likely, He was staying at Peter’s home when news circulated that He was back in town. The news drew such a crowd to the house that it spilled over to the outside. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if a crowd gathered to our house of worship because many people heard that Jesus is present here?

B. Because of Jesus’ Preaching

The crowd must have been enthralled to hear Jesus preach “the word to them” (v. 2). The common people listened to His preaching with delight, because He spoke with authority (Matt. 7:28–29; 12:37). He was probably speaking about God’s kingdom, love, grace, and mercy. Soon, very soon, His preaching would be seen in His acts of mercy.

II. Persistent Friends (Mark 2:3–4)

Four friends showed deep concern for a fifth friend. The fifth friend was a paralytic, whom they wanted to get to Jesus. Likely, they had heard about Jesus' miracles of healing and believed He could heal their friend too. So they arrived at the house where a crowd surrounded Jesus.

A. Undeterred

There the five friends were: one friend lying immobile on a mat and the other four carrying him. But they could not get to Jesus because the crowd blocked the way. Nevertheless, they were undeterred. They carried the paralytic up the outside stairs to the flat roof that covered Jesus and the crowd below. Do obstacles stand in your way when you try to get a needy friend to Jesus? Do not be deterred.

B. Innovative

The four friends found an innovative way to get their friend to Jesus. They scraped away the roof's straw, wood, and clay, and then they lowered their friend through the opening and down to Jesus.

III. A Healed Paralytic (Mark 2:4–12)

A. Spiritual Healing

Likely, some of the debris from the open roof fell on Jesus, but He was not angry. He compassionately turned His attention to the paralytic. He saw the faith of the four friends that compelled them to get their friend to Jesus, and He saw the faith of the paralytic who was willing to endure so much to get to Him. "Son, your sins are forgiven," He said to the paralytic (v. 5). As expected, the teachers of the law who were present objected, likely in whispered tones. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" they muttered (v. 7). Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so He asked them whether it was easier to tell the paralytic his sins were forgiven or to command him to get up, lift his mat, and walk.

B. Physical Healing

The teachers of the law must have been dumbfounded when Jesus identified himself as the Son of Man, a messianic term, and commanded the paralytic to get up, lift his mat, and go home. Their jaws must have dropped as they saw the paralytic do exactly what Jesus had commanded. Not only had he received spiritual healing, but he also received physical healing, both evidences of Jesus' real mercy.

CONCLUSION



All who witnessed the paralytic's forgiveness and physical healing were amazed and praised God (Mark 2:12). Perhaps, if we show mercy to someone in need and bring him or her to Jesus, others will be amazed at the change Jesus makes in that person's life and God will receive praise and glory. Let's seize every opportunity God gives us.