

Lord, Have Mercy

John 12:32(ESV) ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

Psalms 51:1-12(ESV) ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. ⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. ⁹Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Jesus spoke these words “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32).

What is the major attraction to the church? The answer is the uplifted Christ. I was raised in a home where sports were super important. Winning the next game was what we lived for. My brother received the best athlete of the school award. We drove everywhere to cheer him on, and I am glad that we did. Sports is a major attraction. Music and concerts are another major attraction in our country. When it comes to the church, what is the drawing factor? Jesus gives us this answer, “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). The cross of Christ is the drawing factor. The cries of our hearts and souls are literally addressed by the message of the cross. When Jesus was lifted up, He promised to draw all people to Himself because what He did there is uplifting for us. His work raises us from death to life, from sin to forgiveness, from hell-bound to heaven sent, from being lost to being found. The deepest cries, tears, anguishes, turmoil, anxieties, and more are answered at the cross of Christ where He draws us unto Himself. There is no greater work at all than Jesus’ work on the cross. The work that Jesus did there will last for eternity. None of us (maybe one or two) remember who won the Super Bowl, the World Series, the NBA championship, the Stanley Cup fifteen

years ago. Yes, these sporting events draw lots of people. But what drew us to Jesus will never be forgotten. When Jesus was lifted up, He drew you to Himself. Jesus took care of everything for your sake. He became separated from the Father so you could be united to God forever and ever. Amen. Let us pray.

Dear Father, please speak to us in a way that helps us to glory in the cross of Christ. May the Holy Spirit apply to our lives in ever deeper ways the finished work of Jesus on the cross. May Christ and His sacrifice for our sins always be central to our lives. We ask for the resurrection power to always help us to die to our sinful ways and be raised more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Psalm 51 was written by David. It has found its way into our liturgy so part of it is most familiar to us. A word about David. The cry of David's heart, the yearning of his soul was to be close, oh so very close to God. He wanted to be so close to God that he could almost feel God's heartbeat. He wanted to know God's heart, the depths of who God is. He lived for God. He wanted so desperately to please God's heart and fulfill God's desires for him in his life. David grew up with brothers that did not think much of him. David found in God the warmth, love, and tender mercy that no human being could supply. God became his all in all very young in life.

Young people, this is our yearning for you, that you too have a heart for God. We want you to want the Lord. We yearn for you to yearn for the Lord. We desire for you to desire the Lord. We pray for you that you will pray every day to walk closely with God and follow God's ways. We want you to have a heart for the Lord, to have an intense hunger and thirst for God and His Word. We want your life to be filled with the Lord and not the things of this world. We want your soul to know the satisfaction that only God can bring. A forgiven sinner is a powerful witness for the Lord. The blessings of forgiveness will be felt forever!

I have a new challenge for our young people. If you find a fellow brother or sister in Christ at school having a terrible day, please take the time to pray with that person. 1. **“Dear heavenly**

Father, thank you for my friend. My friend needs your help Lord. Please be merciful to my friend. In the name of Jesus. Amen. To pray with another person at school is something God is calling you to do. Having a heart for God means you care for those around you. Talking to God with a friend is not only something wonderful, but necessary as part of your Christian growth.

Some time ago after an extensive workout at the gym I wanted to get home and shower in the worst of ways. I was totally spent and stunk to high heaven. Pastor stinketh. One young person actually stopped me. I was walking and I felt a hand on my shoulder, so I stopped. A young man of 19 asked me several questions about myself. It hit me, there is something that he wants to tell me, and he did. He is thinking of changing jobs and wanted to know what I thought. He wanted prayer. I was thinking in terms of leaving. I was not in the mood to stop and pray. I wanted to get home. He shared a very important need and then we prayed. I asked the Lord to forgive me for not wanting to pray. **2. Young people as you pray with one another at school something will happen to let you know God is honored as you pray together.** Do not hesitate at all. **3. Having a heart for God means you truly care about the people around you and you show it.**

The background to Psalm 51 is well known. King David sinned. He sinned greatly. He committed adultery and then he had the husband of the woman he had relations with put to death. This great man after God's own heart sinned grievously. He did his best to cover his sin, something that God has a way of exposing at just the right time. God sent a prophet, Nathan, to confront David in his sin and David had no choice but to fess up and beg God's forgiveness. David knew God intimately enough that he knew God was a forgiving God for God is a God of mercy. Mercy is God not giving to us what we deserve. For the sins of adultery and murder, according to the Law, David deserved death. He cried out to God for mercy and God did not give to David what he deserved, death. God was merciful to David. Dr. James Montgomery

Boice writes, A prayer for mercy is the cry of the heart to God for salvation. Lord, save me from myself. Save me from my sin. I ask for mercy and not death. Please forgive me my sin for you are ever merciful. David quit excusing his sin and begged forgiveness. He knew he was the man that had disobeyed God. David's remorse was genuine, and his cries were loud enough to be heard in heaven.

We may have a person here who is in an adulterous affair. God knows your sin and your sin will be found out. Please cry out to God for mercy and get out of the affair now. The day of your ruin is right around the corner. Plead with God for forgiveness and go and sin no more. You are about to be found out. Your warning has come. God will forgive you, but you can no longer walk in that sin.

David appeals to God's mercy for forgiveness and he appeals to God's love. How in the world did David know that God was merciful and full steadfast love? I think David was familiar somehow with the story of God's people being delivered from Egypt to the Promised Land. There is much to learn about God in the first five books of the Bible. David knew who he was talking to in this prayer for forgiveness. He knew the character of God that had been revealed to him in the Torah and what he had experienced spending hours alone with God tending sheep. The compassion of God means God feels for our infirmities. We know we have sinned, and we ache. God's compassion does not beat us up. 4. **God's compassion gives us the grace to ask for mercy, to plead for forgiveness.**

David prays, "Blot out my transgressions" vs 2). David had crossed over God's forbidden boundaries. It was serious rebellion. It is war against God. Iniquity refers to our dirty rotten sinful nature that we are born with, sinful from birth. David prays for God to wash him and cleanse him from his sin. Sin is falling short of God's ways.

When we come to worship, we too plead to God for God's mercy, God's steadfast love, and God's compassion when we do the confession of sin. We sing several times in the Kyrie, "Lord have mercy."

In verse 3 David acknowledges his sin. His sin is ever before him. It is all he can think about. He is obsessed with it, feeling guilty to the extreme. Even his bones ached, and he felt the weight of them all day long. He was exhausted from carrying it all on the inside. He was wiped out so to speak (Ps 32).

David was aware of his sin, and he admitted to God his sin. 5. **Friends, when we sin against people, we sin against God for all people are made in God's image.** David felt the weight of his sin against God. David knew the consequences of his sin in terms of human suffering and loss. He gave it all to God throwing himself at the mercy of God.

In verse 5 David profoundly expresses the dirty rottenness of his own sinful nature present in him since the moment of his conception. Our old sinful nature trips us up our entire lives until the day Jesus delivers us from these bodies of sin and death. David knows that God desires truth in our inner lives and wisdom in our souls. In other words, God does not want us living a lie and harming our souls with sin.

"Purge me with hyssop" David prays. Hyssop was used to place the blood of the lamb over the door posts at Passover. David sees a connection between the blood of a sacrificial lamb and forgiveness. David knows that God can cleanse David and make him whiter than snow, made new again. David knew that God does forgive sins. God had purged David. God has broken David so David would repent and be healed. "God you broke my bones, meaning you drove me to the ground so I would look up to you and repent." "Please no longer look at my sin and blot them out."

Only people in tune with God can pray this way. Only people who have hearts for God can say something like this and mean it. When you have super close fellowship with God, as

David did before his great sins, once you lose that fellowship because of sin, you desperately want that closeness with God back for it is what makes life worth living. Sin destroys our lives. Walking in close fellowship with God is a fantastic way to live.

David prays for a pure heart. Only the pure in heart can walk closely with God. Jesus says the pure in heart see God (Matthew 5:8). A cleansed life and a pure heart are one in the same. A pure heart seeks God without stopping. A pure heart draws near to God. A person with a pure heart grows so near to God that they experience God's personhood so thoroughly that they see aspects of God that are hidden from others due to the blindness of sin.

Verse 11, David yearns to have his closeness with God back. God never left David, but the wonderful sense of fellowship that David had with God was gone until David repented. God, I want my joy back, the joy of the Lord. God, I can't stand living without your joy. Lord, you have broken my spirit. Uphold me with a willing spirit. Heal me and please keep me from falling again into the pit of sin.

Did God forgive David? Yes, God did. The blood of Jesus covered David's sin even as it covers ours. But I must say, the consequences of David's sin lasted for the rest of his life. After this the sword of violence never left David's house.

God forgives us our sins yes. We are washed clean, yes. And still there are natural consequences of our own sins. Yes, God restores. Yes, God refreshes. Yes, God renews. Your sin and my sin can hurt the people around us for years to come. May God restrain us from our sins. Amen and Amen.