

## Have Mercy!

Pastor Terry Hanna

*“For Judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy;*

*Mercy triumphs over judgment.” (James 2:13)*

Today I need mercy. I had a good week. I took a few vacation days and had a date with my husband, Mark, for dinner and a concert in Greensboro, NC. I spent a day with my mom in Winston-Salem, and had a visit with my daughter in Asheville. Then I received a phone call. It was from a distant relative. It was a voice I hadn't heard in a while and hoped I would never hear again. It was a voice that needed something, pulling at my heart strings, bulling me into action on his behalf. And I built a wall around my heart to protect myself and turned away.

Do we all have those people in our lives who can make us feel bad about ourselves in order to get something they want from us? Do we all have those people in our lives who try to manipulate and control us to get what they need? It is hard to know where to draw the line from enabling bad behavior to showing mercy.

When the elders of a desert monastery in the 4<sup>th</sup> century were summoned to meet in order to judge a sinful brother, Abba Moses was called to the meeting. He found an old basket that was full of holes and filled it with sand. As the meeting took place, Abba Moses walked around the room dragging the basket behind him. When the elders asked, “What is this?” Abba Moses responded, “My sins are running out behind me, and I do not see them, yet today I come to judge the sins of another.”

Today I need mercy. I cannot help my distant brother because he asks for something I cannot give, but I can confront my own judgmental attitudes, let go, and offer him a blessing instead. As I recognize my own “sins running out behind me,” I discover my solidarity with humankind. We are all broken in some way or another. We all fall short of the beauty of God's plan. We are all sinners in need of grace. So can we respond more gracefully to each other, show mercy, and when we are tempted to judge others, can we say a prayer of blessing instead?

Today we all need to have mercy, in our families, in our places of work, in our communities, within our nation and in our world. We all need to recognize that conflict and imperfection need not lead to feelings of alienation and polarization, but can lead to conversation and understanding. Our desert parents tried to teach us that letting go of judgment liberates us from our own sinfulness and keeps us from distancing ourselves from others. Our desert parents tried to teach us that in trusting God's mercy we can find peace in the storms of life and eternity in the midst of time. So may we, *please*, HAVE MERCY!

What does the Lord require of us? *“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)*