

## **Mercy 20: Merciful Heart**

**'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this He meant the Spirit...' (JN 7: 37-39)**

Each of us has been primed by merciful Jesus; He pours out life-giving Spirit upon the ground of our hearts. Holy water from without inspires a merciful fountain within. We learn to live from that well. Our sin, their sin, and the dulling of an idolatrous culture necessitate fresh washing daily. Spring up, O well! May the merciful waters we entered in baptism make us new once more!

Those of us made alive by that well of mercy live to extend mercy. How could we not?

One thing is perfectly clear to us. Whatever the quality of purity is in us, whatever virtue, whatever new possibilities in our lives have emerged: these are gifts from our merciful God. We who have received freely from His Spirit cannot pat ourselves on the back for emerging holiness and wholeness. Both are gifts from our merciful God. Yes, we do our part. Yet our imperfect response to His gracious initiative places the emphasis on the latter: His gift of mercy!

Anything less than recognizing this gift puts us dangerously near the Pharisee (LK 18:11) who prayed self-congratulatory prayers about his virtue. He achieved holiness his way; He laid hands on himself and drank from his own cistern.

We can and must know better. Like the Samaritan woman to whom Jesus promised 'a spring of water that would well up to eternal life' (JN 4:14), we can go forward as living fountains, primed to release the mercy that has set us free. After her encounter with Jesus, she primed many hearts in Samaria with the life-giving mercy of Jesus Christ. (JN 4: 28-30; 39-42)

So can we prime the hearts of lost and broken ones. The fountain of our hearts overflows with His immeasurable kindness, forbearance, and patience (Rom. 2: 4). Attributing these virtues to mercy alone, we make Him known as we seek out those who have strayed from His ways. We love generously for He has only been generous to us. We worry not about hard repentant ones; we entrust their turning to Him. Apparent to us will be those grieving the wilderness. God has heard their cry for mercy. He gifts us with joyful participation in their homecoming as we do our part to clarify Jesus to them.

Luke delights in the Good Shepherd who goes out to seek and find the strays. He rejoices more over the one who turns than over the hundred who need not! (LK 15:10) That Shepherd calls each one of us into His joyful shepherding: not by virtue of our degrees or moral achievements but by gift of living water, which has become our freedom, now unto eternity.

Spring up, O well!

**‘With joy you shall draw water from the wells of salvation.’ (IS 12:3)**

**Prayer Points:**

- **Desert Stream/Living Waters:** Regional Leadership Development: Please pray for the new Living Waters advisory committee as they strategize for new growth and development.
- **Restored Hope Network:** Thanksgiving! How grateful we are for the amazing gifts of life and liberty and the opportunity to pray and share the hope we have in Jesus Christ! Thank you Lord for the many men and women who you gathered to form Restored Hope. We give you thanks for the courage of many in this time of stress and challenges in the US and the world.
- **Courage:** May all Courage members and Christian ministries for those with SSA persevere in prayer and come to know the Lord more intimately.
- **Ministries of Pastoral Care:** We pray that the church would regain all that has been lost and that the Word, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and true Christian imagery and symbol in the Sacraments would be restored in fullness to each and every gathering of the church.

**Amen and Amen!!!**