

A Prayer for Mercy...

Merciful God – we gather with praise and thanksgiving on our lips.

Praise and thanksgiving for your mercy.

For your mercy known to us through...

your forgiving love and your deep acceptance

your attentive care and your tireless commitment to justice

your inspiring teaching and your generous provision

your patient listening and your truthful speaking

We gather with praise and thanksgiving on our lips for your mercy.

Your mercy that gives us life when meaninglessness threatens to suffocate us and your mercy that nourishes us when emptiness leaves us hungry and hollow.

Your mercy that resurrects us from the tombs of our despair

Your mercy that untangles us from our life-robbing addictions.

Your mercy that humbles us when we are dangerously overweight with arrogance.

Your mercy that makes us gratefully dependent on those we once despised and rejected.

Your mercy that calls us your children when we do not believe that we are even worthy to be called your servants.

Your mercy that invites us to start over again when we cannot imagine that anyone would give us another chance.

Your mercy that heals our wounds that are beyond the reach of our understanding.

Your mercy that opens our eyes to the true identity of our beauty and belovedness.

Your mercy that calls us into partnership with you, believing that even we can make a healing difference in this world – such is your merciful faith in us.

Merciful God, even as your mercy moves our lips to praise, we need you to know that we gather today with a longing within our hearts. Our hearts throb. Our hearts ache for an experience of your mercy – a lived experience of your mercy – a heart-warming experience of your mercy – an experience of your unextinguishable love for us. This alone will set us ablaze with a love for you and our neighbour...for ourselves and our enemies.

We confess that instead of being joyful conduits of your mercy in the world, we can be grumpy gatekeepers instead. We do the same as some did to Bartimaeus of old. We silence, rather than encourage the cries of those in need. We do this...

Each time we refuse to incarnate your gift of forgiveness by withholding our own.

Each time we lock people up in the fiery pit of our own resentment, the hell of our own bitterness, while you long for them to walk free in the fields of your forgiveness.

Each time we refuse to speak to them when you long for our words to re-affirm your words of absolution: "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." We do so proudly yet mistakenly, in the name of moral purity.

Forgive us for how we undermine your grace when we think it must be earned – when we think that your mercy is measured by merit – when we think that good behaviour secures your goodness. We do this in ignorance and through weakness, but we also confess that we do this through our own deliberate fault ... each time we support systems that squeeze the life out of the vulnerable or when we fail to resist legislation that prevents those on the margins from accessing

the means of life. We often do this in the name of safety and security...that is nothing more than the idolatrous worship of our fear.

Lord have mercy on us for failing to be a merciful people. A merciful church. A merciful nation.

So, with Bartimaeus of old – we ourselves cry out – Lord have mercy on us. Please hear our cry over the noise of our own self-critical spirits that would silence us and tell us to know our place. By your spirit embolden us to trust that our place – our true place – is resting in your goodness and mercy all the days of our life. Give us a taste today of your goodness that we may take up refuge in your mercy.

Amen.

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