

April 23, 2021

Here's Hope
by Rev. Jerry Rea

Mercy Awakens Hope

At James 2:13-14 we find an interesting idea. In various translations it is rendered differently, but the idea remains the same. Mercy wins out over judgement. We see this idea clearly in Scripture. Most plainly it is seen in the very life of Jesus, the Christ. In His sinless life, He condemns all who sin, but by His endless love He demonstrates love over judgement. So, at one and the same time, Jesus fulfills the very law that condemns us but loves us anyway. I've had the great privilege of talking with many who say that they feel God leading them to give themselves to Him, but they feel sinful and unworthy. So, they too, feel both aspects. On the one hand, they are condemned and unworthy, on the other hand completely fully loved. Which is true? The answer is both!

The law is given as a teacher. The Scripture teaches what is right and what is wrong. We never have to wonder about what is wrong; the Bible tells us. If you read the Bible and come away "confused," you were probably confused before you picked it up. It is not given to make us feel good. It is not some simplistic moral devotional to help us realize how wonderful we are. Oh no, the Bible teaches us how sinful and morally bankrupt we are. As we read we see the needs of those whose biographies are included in its pages. We feel with them as they fail because we feel their pain. We too have been there. For example, like Peter, we too have denied our Lord. Though He has done nothing but loved us, we let Him down. We are disloyal to the only one who's truly always been there for us. In Luke 22 Peter wept bitterly. He'd found out two things. First, he found out who he really was. He'd told Jesus that though all others let Him down, he himself would not. Second, Peter found out that though he'd deserted Jesus, Jesus had not deserted him. He subsequently found Peter at the beach, forgave him his sin, and recaptured him into the fold. The law is not the solution; the law simply points out the problem.

Enter God's mercy, expressed in Jesus, the Christ. By loving us anyway we see clearly that mercy triumphs over judgment. His love is bigger than our failure and sin. His love is more powerful than our sin. His love trumps our sin. Here's an illustration. When you play some forms of card games you have to learn which card "trumps" another. In Rook (for example) the Rook trumps all other cards. God's mercy and love is a trump card. It trumps all our sin and sinfulness.

Here's the point. His mercy awakens our hope. When we truly realize our need, when we truly see ourselves as we really are, then Jesus can change us. Jesus told the Pharisees He wished they were blind, then they could see. You may check out that story at John 9. By seeing our blindness, we realize our need to see. Then Jesus can give us light. It could be that God has allowed you to truly mess up in life just so you'll turn to Him.

He's waiting, turn to Him in hope!
Jerry Rea