



Theme: The Gospel on Broadway 2026

“Les Misérables – Mercy and Redemption”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, April 11-12, 2026, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

¹³ Then [Jesus] added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.” – Matthew 9:13

- VIDEO** **Les Mis Clip 1**
- SONG** **Jean Valjean’s Soliloquy – Ryan**
- SLIDE** **The Gospel on Broadway:
Les Miserable**

The year was **1862 when Victor Hugo** wrote his novel, **Les Misérables**, which in French means, “the miserable ones, the pitiful, of the poor.” He was describing a large percentage of the population in France in his day and in the years leading up to his day. The novel was designed to prick the hearts of those who would read a 1500-page book. It was meant to inspire them and to move them to live differently and to **act with mercy** towards those who were deemed as “less than.”

Does that sound like a message we need today? I know it is one of the central messages of Jesus and his teachings.

The novel became an instant hit. It was published not only in France but around the world in multiple languages. Millions of copies were sold. By the end of Hugo's life, he was a national hero in France. **3 million people came out in the streets to observe his death.** The novel has since been translated into film **50 times** in a variety of languages, including the 2012 version of which you just saw a snippet. Its most famous adaptation was produced on the stage in 1980 in Paris, France. The musical version of Les Misérables has gone on to be one of the most successful musicals of all time. Many of you have seen it and experienced its music. **The music and the story are in many ways a picture of the gospel.**

This story that has moved audiences to standing ovations is not a story from 1862. It is a story that is 2000 years old. The story of redemption and mercy and grace. It is a story of great love. It is the story of the gospel. What makes this such a great story is that it deals with the human condition. We see human beings at their best and at their worst. It deals with stories of tragedy, suffering, loss, heartache and pain. The story embodies mercy, grace, redemption, and transformation.

SLIDE Introduction: How Jean Valjean Became a Thief – France, 1795

We need to know the story to make sense of today's message. The novel begins in 1795 at the beginning of the French Revolution began which continued for about four more years. Great poverty had set in and many people in France did not have enough food. There were not enough jobs to sustain families and so people went hungry. People were malnourished and they were sick and many people were dying.

John Valjean is the protagonist in the novel. At 25 years old he was living with his sister and her seven children. He was the sole

breadwinner. His sister tried to work but with seven children what could she really do. Victor Hugo describes what John Valjean did for work:

He hired out as a reaper, a workman, a Teamster or laborer— whatever he could do to find work...there was a severe winter, and Jean Val Jean had no work. His family had no bread with seven children to feed.

Jean Valjean went out on that cold winter's night during a severe winter with no income and no way to buy bread for 7 children. That night he became a common criminal. He walked to the bakery, and he broke out the baker's glass window. He reached in, stole a loaf of bread and ran. He was caught and sentenced to five years hard labor in the quarries for stealing a loaf of bread. In the quarries he no longer had a name but simply a number. **He was prisoner number 24601.**

While in prison there were several attempts at escape. Each one that he participated in postponed his sentence. By the end, he had spent 19 years doing hard labor in prison for stealing a loaf of bread.

The musical and film adaptation began in 1815 when he is finally released from prison. Now **he is 44 years old**. His papers, or passport if you will, identify him as a felon. When he leaves prison, he quickly finds out that being a felon is not really freedom. He simply tries to find a night's stay in an inn, but as he presents his papers, he is rejected in every place and told that no felons are welcome.

Finally, he gets ready to sleep on a bench and a woman comes and tells him there is one place that will take him in. She pointed to a door. He went and knocked on the door and the bishop in that community welcomed him in. The bishop gave him a meal and a place to sleep for the night. In the middle of the night John Valjean realized there was really no hope for him. He was a common thief. He was branded a thief so he might as well be one. He tiptoed down the stairs, took his knapsack, and took all the bishop's silverware. He put it in his

knapsack, but as he was leaving, he was interrupted by the bishop. John Valjean turned and struck the bishop. He knocked him out and then ran out the door.

SLIDE Act 1 – Scene 1 – Redemption

In the scene we watched, he has been caught and brought back to the bishop. If he is taken back to prison he will spend the rest of his life in the quarries, or worse, he may be put to death. The bishop's response of mercy sends John Valjean's life on a different trajectory. Did you see the gospel in that scene?

Jesus teaches something in the Sermon on the Mount, his main body of teaching in Matthew and Luke's gospels, which the bishop takes seriously and literally lives out. In Matthew 5 we read...

BIBLE

³⁸ "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give them your coat, too. ⁴¹ If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. ⁴² Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.

The bishop has been beaten and robbed by this man. He has every right under the law to see that he is sentenced to the harshest possible punishment. But this is not what the bishop does. Instead, the bishop follows the teachings of Jesus, and he shows the man mercy.

Why? What is the point of Jesus' teaching? Why does Jesus tell us that when someone strikes us on the cheek we should turn and offer the other cheek? Why did he tell us that when someone takes something from us, we should offer to give even more? That is foolishness and absurd by the world's standards. The way of the world

and what our heart tells us is that we should get even with somebody. When **we don't just get even, we get ahead.**

But what Jesus knows is this—that the only real **possibility of transformation and change** in the other person happens when, instead of returning evil for evil, you, **“return blessing instead,”** as the apostle Paul tells us. What happens when somebody wounds you and instead you bless them or return to them kindness, Paul says is like, **“Putting burning coals upon their head.”** They feel ashamed and guilty. Maybe there is the possibility at that moment that they might reevaluate their life and their actions. They can begin the process of change. At the very least, if someone is your enemy, it is hard for them to continue to hate you when **you continually show kindness** to them. Eventually that begins to work on their soul.

When it comes to nations, we can continue to return evil for evil or we can begin to ask, **“How do we change the hearts of entire peoples?”** Certainly, in our own lives this is what Jesus calls us to do, and that is what John Valjean experiences from the bishop. This changes him and his life from this time forward is utterly different because of this experience.

SLIDE **“I have ransomed you from evil.”**

I want you also to notice the biblical phrase used by the bishop. This is the same phrase used to describe **what Jesus Christ does** for us. He **paid a price** and it was not two silver candlesticks and a bag of silverware. Jesus gave his life to ransom us from evil. We have been redeemed and purchased. The apostle Paul says, **“You were bought with a price.”** The cross is meant to be a dramatic message to us of redemption and mercy.

What John Valjean realizes is that this man could have sentenced him to death, but instead he is giving him life. Not only that, but the bishop also **blesses him with even more** than what he took. The bishop does not take back the silverware but gives him the candlesticks as a

blessing. Jean Valjean then lives with this knowledge that he is redeemed and that somebody paid a price for him. The rest of his life **he chooses to live up to that blessing** and what was paid for him.

The Christian gospel is about us looking at the cross and recognizing that God paid a price. He gave His Son who suffered and died and **is our Redeemer**, the one who ransomed us from the grave. We are meant to look at the cross and say in our heart, **“I need to live differently because of that.”** That is one dimension of the cross of Christ and the idea of **atonement**—that when we see it, we are so moved that we say, “I can’t live the way I lived before because a man died for me.” This is the picture that we find in his powerful portrayal in Victor Hugo’s novel of Jean Val Jean and the Bishop. We begin to see this man’s life changing before our eyes.

The novel and the musical then **fast forward eight years**. Jean Valjean has left and begins living in another village. He realizes that as a felon, people won’t give him a chance, so he changes his name and his identity to **Monsieur Madeleine** as he moves to the town of Vigo. He is determined to **demonstrate mercy to everyone else**. He lives a life of integrity, mercy, kindness, and compassion towards other people. He takes a simple job, and he works himself up in the company. He goes from being a worker to a manager and then **finally he owns** the company. He becomes a very successful businessman and everyone in the **community has come to admire** Monsieur Madeleine.

Finally, the people in that city ask him to **be their mayor**. He was a felon who had come to be the mayor of the village of Vigo. But this is not the end of the story. He **shows mercy** to all in his community just as he has been shown mercy. There is one person to whom he shows mercy, and it changes her life.

Her name is **Fontaine**. She had borne a child out of wedlock. She had a lover one summer when she was a teenager. She literally lost her childhood, and the lover left her in the fall. She gave birth to a child,

Cossette. In France at this time, to have a child out of wedlock, was equivalent to being a felon. She had found a job working at the factory that was owned by Jean Valjean who is now Monsieur Madeline, But the foreman finds out she has a child out of wedlock and fires her without Valjean being aware. No one else would hire her and no one would show her mercy or grace.

Finally, unable to hold down a job, she left her beloved daughter with a couple who runs the inn at a town nearby and she tries to start her life over again, just as Jean Val Jean had done. She hoped to find a job and that people would not know her history. She begins to work in the village but after a time someone discovers that she has a child out of wedlock and she loses her job. She is still sending money back to the couple who are taking care of Cossette, but since she has lost her job, she sells everything that she has to take care of her daughter. In the end it is not enough and so she has her hair cut off and sold. Then she has nothing left and still no job.

Well, she has one thing left. She has her body to sell. So, Fontaine, though she is sick and feverish, goes on the streets and begins to sell her body to make money to take care of her daughter. She is **another of the miserable ones** that Hugo is writing about. He paints a powerful picture of the sorrow and the tragedy that Fontaine felt and experienced in her life. It is captured so well in this song, "I Dreamed a Dream."

SONG **"I Dreamed a Dream" with Brooke Smith**

SLIDE **Act I – Scene II – Tender Mercy**

Do you feel the misery and the pain that Hugo was writing about in the hearts of people who were reduced to selling themselves on the street? Here is a woman who desperately wanted somebody to understand, somebody to take care or somebody to reach out in an act of kindness. But all people can do is judge her for who she has been. She is dying of tuberculosis and doesn't even know, and nobody cares.

There is a question Hugo is asking in this story.

SLIDE Do we see people?

Do we notice the people who are miserable in our own life? Do we notice the miserable ones? Do we notice those who are hurting and just need somebody to offer a word of kindness or an act of compassion? Do we notice when that person at work gets off the phone and you can tell they are in tears? Do we stop and talk to them, to offer a word of encouragement or empathy? **Do we recognize people in our community who once had dreams but have them no more?**

I worked in downtown Denver when I was in graduate school at a community service agency which helped those living on the streets. The woman who ran the agency was in her 60s; Elizabeth was her name. There were many prostitutes who would come in for clothing or food or shelter assistance, and I'll never forget one woman that Elizabeth sat down to talk to. The prostitute was so surprised that he was talking to her, especially since she believed he had her fired from her good job. She said, **"I can't believe that you really see me. I walk on the streets, and most people look straight ahead, and they pretend they don't see me. I began to think I was invisible."**

Do we see people? Do we treat people with dignity? Do we care?

Eventually, Fontaine is arrested by Inspector Javert. This is a man who follows the rules. He has no compassion and does not care about offering grace. **He recognizes that there is a rule which has been broken** and Fontaine deserves to go to jail. She pleads with him, "Please, I have a daughter to feed. **What will happen to my daughter if you throw me in jail?"**

Javert does not care about Fontaine's daughter. She broke the law and that was all there was to it. In that moment the mayor of the city, **Jean Val Jean** who is now Monsieur Madeleine, comes into the picture. He sees Fontaine and he hears what is being said about her in the

conversation. **On the spot he pardons her.** He not only pardons her, but here is the most powerful, influential and wealthiest man in the city and he takes her to get medical attention. **He takes this sickly prostitute that others would despise into his home.** He cares for her and shows her mercy.

SLIDE Act I – Scene II – Tender Mercy

She can't even fathom this act of kindness. When she awakens in his home she did not understand. She thinks he may want favors. She still thinks that he is like any other man, **"It's okay, there is no charge,"** she says. "Don't you want to kiss me?"

"No," Jean Val Jean replies, "I just want to care for you."

She will **die in his arms**, but not before she knows that she is a **person of worth and has value**—not before he gives her hope. I see these scenes with Fontaine and Jean Val Jean, and I think about **two stories from the Bible.** The first story is in the Old Testament in the book of Hosea. Hosea the prophet was commanded by God to marry Gomer. **Gomer was a prostitute and Hosea paid to purchase her** from the man who owned her, and then Hosea loved her. He married her and they had children together.

God said to Hosea, "I want you to do this so that **this might be a picture to my people Israel** of my love for them and my willingness to forgive and show mercy. I want them to know that they have prostituted themselves by **following other gods, but I will still take them back.** I will still **faithfully love them** if only they will let me."

But after making a home together and having children, **Gomer has a relapse** and she goes back to a life of prostitution. God says to Hosea once more, **"Go back and take her to be your wife and love her again** as I have done with Israel."

In Hosea 6:6 God is speaking **directly to the Israelites.** They are **like Inspector Javert**, and they are very clear about what is right and

what is wrong. They thought what God really wanted was animal sacrifices. God says to them, “This is not what I long for. You mistreat people. You treat the miserable ones poorly. Don’t do this anymore.”

Finally, God says this:

BIBLE

⁶ I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices.

I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.

That word love is mercy. It is a word that in Hebrew means a variety of things. We usually think of it as forgiveness when we feel we have a right to revenge. That is one dimension of mercy, but in the Bible, mercy is much more than that. Mercy is loving kindness and compassion and empathy. Mercy is caring for somebody else who may not deserve it but you give it to them anyway.

SLIDE ***hesed = “mercy, loving kindness”***

God says, “This is what I desire, mercy and not sacrifice.” You might remember that in **Micah 6:8** the prophet asks: “What does the Lord require of you?”

BIBLE

***⁸ No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good,
and this is what he requires of you:
to do what is right, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.***

Mercy is compassion and empathy. It is loving kindness that shows itself in action. This is what God requires of us as we walk humbly with him. Part of what this story does is **ask us a question**. Are **we living that way?** Do we understand that part of our mission in life is to look around and **see people who need compassion** and kindness and mercy? Are we extending this to them? Jesus made it very clear when he said in the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5:

BIBLE

⁷ God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

The other pictures in Scripture that I remember when I think of *Les Misérables* comes from **Luke chapter 7**, where Jesus is sitting at a table with some religious leaders. You might remember that when they gathered for a meal in Jesus' day, they would **recline at a low table** with their feet stretched out in front of them. Jesus was eating at the home of a Pharisee. **The Pharisees were the "pure ones."** They were the righteous ones. The word Pharisee is derived from the Hebrew word for purity. They were very much about following the laws and the rules and being righteous and pure.

There is a **knock on the door** and the Pharisee says, "Come in." To his shock and horror, standing in the doorway is the **town prostitute**. She walks in and you can imagine the Pharisee getting worked up and demanding, **"What are you doing here?"**

She quietly walks over to where Jesus is sitting, carrying her most **valuable possession, a jar of scented oil** which she had been saving for a very important day. Perhaps it had been her dream to save this for her wedding day. She is already crying as she walks into the room and falls at the **feet of Jesus**. She anoints Jesus and wipes his feet with her tears and the oil and her hair. Throughout this whole encounter the Pharisee is asking, **"What kind of man is this Jesus that would let this kind of trash touch him?"**

But Jesus looks at her with compassion. Somewhere along the way he had **ministered to her** and cared for her. He had treated her in a way that she had never been treated before and now she was repaying him with all that she had. **Jesus had showed her mercy, and it had touched her heart.**

These stories remind us that we are called to show one another mercy. One of the most profound parts of the story in *Les Misérables* is

that John Valjean, now Monsieur Madeleine, is the most powerful citizen in town. He is the **most affluent and most respected** in his community. It reminds us that **to whom much is given, much is expected**. This is what Jesus said in **Luke, chapter 12**.

I see that in many of you. Many of you are affluent. You have been successful in your business, and you have become prominent people, yet I see you with your **sleeves rolled up working in a soup kitchen and at mission projects** throughout the city and throughout the world. You recognize something and you are willing to say, “All of this stuff is about **how I might use these resources** and blessings for God’s purposes. **It’s not about me.**” That is an important life lesson that Jean Valjean teaches us and that Jesus teaches us.

We find that Jean Valjean, who remember is now Monsieur Madeleine, has received word that a man in Paris with a very low IQ who has been a thief in the past has been caught and has **been accused of being John Valjean** because he looks like him. The police believe they have caught him and now he is going back to the quarries. **A trial is taking place** and the real John Valjean, Monsieur Madeleine, is faced with a dilemma. There is an innocent man who will **spend the rest of his life in the quarries** if he does not speak up. **What should he do?**

John Valjean goes back to Paris, and he sits in the courtroom. He is wrestling with this decision. **To be merciful will cost him the rest of his life** because he would spend the rest of his days in the quarries. He would give up everything for a man who has been a thief in the past and has a very low IQ. **Why not just let this man go** and take his place as John Valjean? There is a struggle which he is feeling. But finally, during the trial, **Mayor Monsieur Madeleine stands and speaks**. Listen to what he says at the trial.

SONG **“Who Am I” - Ryan**

SLIDE **Scene I – Act III – The Costliness of Mercy**

So, he confesses in the middle of the trial. He is not just the mayor

Vigo, but he is the **former convict 24601**. He has resigned himself to going back to prison. Here is the question which is posed by the scene: **What price am I willing to pay to do the right thing?** What price am I willing to pay to show mercy to someone else who does not deserve the punishment they are about to receive? What price am I willing to pay to show kindness and compassion and empathy?

It's easy to show compassion and kindness **when people notice** and they will pat you on the back and you will be a hero. It is easy for **corporations** to do the right thing and to show mercy when they can **turn it into an ad campaign** and people will say, "Wow, what a great corporate citizen they are."

But am I willing to do the right thing, the compassionate thing, when it **costs me something** and no one notices or praises me? Am I willing to pay a price and to sacrifice something great, to take a risk and to live boldly, and do those things that I don't feel like doing—the things that **might be hard for me to do?**

Sometimes there is a voice inside which says, "**The way I know what God wants me to do is that I feel excited about it. That's the key for me.**" Well, that's true sometimes. God puts an excitement in our heart to do something, and we know that is what God's will is for us, so we follow.

But then I hear another voice: "I just don't feel led to do that thing. I don't feel good about doing this thing. **I feel a little bit afraid** and so **I think that is not God's will** for my life."

It's as though when we feel afraid this is how God shows us that God does not want us to do something. I have some bad news. This is a bunch of baloney with the capital B! I hope we can all hear this message today from Jean Valjean's story, and from Jesus who went to a cross. Almost every single one of the most important things which God will call us to do **we will be afraid** to do. We will be a little bit scared. We may have some fear and **even dread** about it. The more we think

about it we can find ourselves saying, “I really don’t want to do that. **I wish I hadn’t signed up for that thing.**”

This is how it works, but **we go ahead and do it anyway**. We press through the fear. We come out the other side and we can then say, “I am so glad I did that. That **experience was one of the most important things in my life.**”

If we are afraid of doing something and we feel a certain sense of risk, we need to press through it. Are we willing to live boldly and courageously? Are we willing to **take some risks** and to live sacrificially to do what we know God wants you to do? Maybe we are afraid of going to the **soup kitchen** or the **shelter** or to **Guatemala** or **Africa** because we have a sense of fear for “those people.” We say, “I will just write out a check.”

Yes, we can write out a check, and the church appreciates that, and so does the shelter and the soup kitchen. But it’s also true that it may be the very place that we need to press through and get our hands dirty. It may be the risk we need to take and just do it.

Maybe there is a mission trip that we have felt our heart calling us to. We know we should be doing it and every time we talk about it we feel a pull inside our heart. But then we get afraid and say in our head, “**What happens if I get malaria?** What happens if this bad thing happens? What happens if there is strife in the country? What if the volcano erupts again and messes with my travel plans?”

Our fear gets the best of us and we say, “No, I will let somebody else go and I will send a check.” But that may be the very place which God is calling us to and press forward and through the fear. Maybe we feel a tug to help with **vacation Bible school** or with our **youth** group or to become a volunteer with our **Caring Ministry** or welcome people each week as an **usher or greeter**, but we say, “That scares me a little bit. I am afraid of young people. I am intimidated by a hospital room. **What if they don’t like me?**”

These are the moments that God will use to sanctify and make us holy. We **become more like Jesus Christ** if we are willing to do the hard things. Somehow, **God has a way of taking care** of these things if we are willing to take a risk. **Are we willing to live boldly and take a risk to pursue a life of mercy and compassion?**

Not everyone thought Jean Valjean's actions were admirable. **Inspector Javert is pretty upset by what he sees unfolding.** You see, **Javert was a guard at the prison** where Jean Val Jean was serving time for 19 years. Javert went on to become a police inspector and now he is assigned to the town of Vigo where Jean Valjean is now Monsieur Madeleine, the mayor. Javert looks at the Monsieur Madeleine, and he is shocked because **he recognizes this man.** He is certain that this is Jean Valjean, the convict and felon who had disappeared. We find this dramatic moment, after Fontaine has died, where Javert confronts Monsieur Madeline because now he knows that this is Jean Valjean, prisoner **24601.**

VIDEO **Les Mis Clip 2**

SLIDE **Act I – Scene III – Mercy or Judgement**

Javert spends the rest of the novel hunting Jean Valjean to arrest him and have him put back in the quarries. **Javert is a man who only sees things in black and white.** There are good people and there are bad people and there is **no chance for mercy** in between. For Javert, **rules come before people.** He lives a **merciless life.** In many ways he **mirrors** the group of people with whom Jesus was in conflict on a regular basis. **They were the Pharisees.**

I remind you that in Matthew's Gospel we find that Jesus called Matthew to be one of his followers. **Matthew was a tax collector,** and you might remember that tax collectors were considered traitors in the day of Jesus. They typically live a life of ill repute. They got wealthy on the backs of the Israelite people. **They supported the Roman occupation.** Most of their friends were not religious. Matthew is

standing at its tax collecting booth and Jesus comes by and says, “Matthew, I want you to become one of my followers.”

Jesus shows him extravagant mercy. **Matthew is stunned** that a religious person would want him. “You want me to be one of your followers?”

“Come on Matthew and I will make you a fisher of people.”

Matthew says, “How about if **I have a dinner party** and I invite my friends and you can talk then tonight? Would that be okay?”

Jesus says, **“I would love to come to your home.”**

That night, Jesus goes to Matthew’s house and all **of Matthew’s friends who are sinners** and tax collectors and prostitutes are there. Jesus is eating with them, and the disciples were there as well. **Jesus is in his element.** This is the exact situation he loves to be in.

Then the **Pharisees come along.** They see Jesus eating in this house. They are so pure and holy they would not dare cross the threshold of someone’s house like Matthew. They **wag their fingers** at Jesus and asked the disciples, “Why does he eat with people like that? Doesn’t he know they are unholy? Doesn’t he know that is unlawful? **He should not be doing that!**”

Jesus comes to them and says, **“You don’t understand, do you? Go back and study this passage of scripture from Hosea where God says, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’** Why don’t you meditate on that and see if you can understand then **why I eat** with sinners and tax collectors.”

SLIDE **“I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”**

Twice in three chapters Jesus quotes this verse from Hosea, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice,” because it captures **his heart for people.** People came before laws for Jesus and his desire was to see people **redeemed and transformed by the power of mercy.**

The question which is raised in the interchange between Jean Valjean and Javert is: Which one is me? **Am I Javert or Jean Valjean?** Am I judging other people constantly? Do I look down upon them because of their past or their background or their station in life?

SLIDE Am I Javert or Jean Valjean?

Or do I try and see people the way that God sees them? Do I understand that people can change? Do I understand that people can undergo transformation when they receive mercy and grace? Do I understand that sometimes **people get a bad rap?** Do I understand that people can move in new directions when they are offered redemption? **Do I see what could** be instead of simply what is?

How do I look at people? Is it all about the rules or is there room for mercy in your hearts and in your life? Jean Valjean or Javert, which one am I?

SLIDE Act II – Scene 1 – Mercy and Redemption

These themes that permeates the novel and the musical Les Misérables is captured wonderfully this time of year at our **Thrift Shop**. Have you ever been to the Thrift Shop this time of year? It is spring cleaning time here in Durango and when people can't sell something at a garage sale do you know where it ends up? It ends up at the Thrift Store.

GRAPHIC Thrift Shop Pile

One of the great things about going down to volunteer at the Thrift Store is that you get first choice of all the stuff which comes into the dock in the back. **Many people volunteer so they get first dibs** at all the stuff that comes in so you might think about that in the future! The problem is when you take your kids with you because then everything is a treasure! You thought it was junk but to my kids it is the best thing ever! I went down to the Thrift Store recently and found these cordless headphones. They don't really work but I think I can fix

it! I am excited about this...if I can fix it! If I can't, you may find it back at the Thrift Store again!

But you also find treasures buried at the Thrift Store. Here's what I believe. Every week when we gather for worship, **this is God's rummage sale**. I think all of us in this room are broken in some way. We are a bit worn and rejected by somebody. Maybe in our own minds, or in the estimation of some others, **we don't appear to be worth** very much.

But God sees through all of this. **God sees all your junk** and all the **garbage we carry around** inside from our past. And then God sees past that and says, **"I see a treasure and I want that one."** And God doesn't just pay pennies on the dollar. God pays an extravagant price for us—the price of his son Jesus Christ.

That, in the end, is the story of Les Misérables. It is the story of a **bishop who looks at a felon** who has beat him and stolen from him but refuses to give up on him and says, **"I see something worth saving in you."**

It is the story of the most prominent citizen in Vigo who looks at a prostitute and says, **"I see something worth loving in you."**

It is a story of a mayor, a man with wealth and comfort, with nothing to gain and **everything to lose being willing to take the place of a common thief**.

It is the story of a **God who looks past all our stuff** and says, **"I see something worth loving and you."**

Victor Hugo wrote this in the preface of the 1862 edition of Les Misérables.

SLIDE ***"So long as ignorance and misery remain on earth, books like this cannot be useless."***

This book, Les Misérables, is really a story that is 2000 years old. So long as there are ignorance and misery in this world, **the gospel**

cannot be useless.

SLIDE Act II – Scene I – Sacrifice

Valjean does escape from Javert and finds Fontaine’s daughter Cosette and raises her as his own. As she becomes a young woman she eventually falls for one of the young men who is leading the French Revolution. Well Javert is still chasing them, Valjean must now decide if he is willing to let go of this young woman that he has come to love as his own daughter. Not only that, but he must also decide if he wants what's best for the young man, Marius. He eventually decides to sacrifice his own needs as an adoptive father to be able to give away this young woman to this new love and he prays for this young man in one of the most touching pieces of music we find in this musical.

Ryan is going to sing it for you as we come forward for communion because it is a reminder that God wants what's best for us and invites us to this table because of a sacrifice that he made 2000 years ago. God let go of his Son and then created a table where everyone is welcome. It is a table where we can bring our mistakes and our failures and our beauty and our broken places.

SLIDE Communion

SLIDE Prayer

While your heads are bowed and your eyes are closed, I would like to invite you to pray in your own words. You can begin by simply recognizing that God has looked at you, despite all the stuff that maybe nobody else sees or knows about—all your mistakes and shortcomings, and God sees something of great worth. God paid a price for you, and he **has shown you mercy**. So would you start your prayer time by simply saying, **“God, thank you for loving me. Thank you for your mercy...”**

I wonder if you can imagine him holding you in his arms—holding you tight and whispering to you, **“You are mine. You are mine.”**

Perhaps you have lived a merciless life. You have been quick to judge others, and you have been harsh in the way you spoke to them. You have said things that are hurtful about them. This will be a perfect time for you to say, **“God, please forgive me** for those times I was merciless and **help me to be merciful.** Help me to live a life of mercy and kindness.” Why don’t you ask God to help you with that now?

Finally, **maybe you have struggled with courage.** You have been wanting to play it safe and not take any risks. God might be saying to you today, **“You must risk. You must be bold** and be willing to do the things that are hard and difficult.” Maybe you might simply say, “Lord, **fill my heart with courage** and help me to live for you in a way which is pleasing to you. Help me to boldly show mercy and live for you.”

Oh God, we offer our lives to you. We give you thanks and praise for your mercy and grace. Help us to be people of mercy. Help us to be people of kindness and compassion. Help us to live boldly and courageously for you. May we demonstrate to others the great love you have for us, that their lives might be changed, as well as our own. We offer ourselves to you, in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

April 11-12 Order

1. Countdown
2. Ryan welcomes people and invites them to stand in body or spirit.
3. Song – “Goodbye Yesterday”
4. Jeff welcomes and shares:
 - A. QR Code
 - B. Invites people to greet each other.
5. NO Announcement Video
6. Sermon Video Intro – Les Mis Clip 1
7. Song – “Valjean’s Soliloquy”
8. Sermon
9. Communion
10. Song – “Bring Him Home” Ryan
11. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
12. Offering (Native Hope Food Drive on April 18 from 10 to 3)
13. Med Moments
14. Care Ministers
15. Closing Prayer