



## Theme: The Gospel on Broadway



### *“Les Misérables – Mercy and Redemption”*

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#### **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***


**Meditation Moments for Monday, April 13** – Read **Luke 15:11-32**. This is one of the best-known of Jesus’ parables. It is the final of three powerful stories that Jesus tells us in this chapter about lost things. We find a reckless young man wrecks his family relationships and makes a mess of his life. Nevertheless, he finds mercy and redemption because through all his wandering, his father (like God) has been waiting patiently, eager to welcome him home.


-  Did you ever run away from home? If so, where did you go and what happened as a result? What stages does the younger son go through on his journey? What does the younger son realize that turns him back towards his father? What do you think the point of this parable is for Jesus? Does this story teach us about being broken, repentance, and God’s love?
-  What do verses 20 and 32 tell you about God’s attitude toward those who have “messed up”? How central is this understanding of God to our hope for redemption? Based on your experiences, which brother in the story do you identify with more? Who are the individuals or groups of people you find it hardest to want to “welcome home”?

**Prayer:** *Thank you God for always wanting to welcome us home, regardless of where we have been or what we have experienced. Give me the courage to welcome*

others when I would rather be like the older brother and push them away. May I be open to the mercy and grace you offer to each of us when we are lost. Amen.


**Tuesday, April 14** – Read **Genesis 28:10-22**. In this passage, Jacob is on the run because he deceived his father to get the blessing his older twin Esau was legally entitled to. As you would imagine, Esau was not happy and threatened his brother's life in Genesis 27:41. But in a dream, Jacob encounters God, and like the son in yesterday's story, he finds that God still cares about him.


 In the ebb and flow of your life so far, when have you felt beached, high and dry? What is so remarkable in God's display of grace towards Jacob? What symbol did Jacob's dream use to communicate the connection between God's realm and ours? Have you ever discerned that there may be more to life than just the physical world our senses detect?

 What "deals" with God have you made in your life? How did they turn out? As an adult, how do you "deal" with God? Do you think God still speaks through dreams? What are the dangers and benefits of relying on dreams for guidance? How did Jacob respond to his dream? Reflect on your own experiences of worship (in church or elsewhere)—are you aware of the awesomeness of being in the presence of God?

**Prayer:** *God, there are times in my life where I have felt like running away because of things I have done or things that have been done to me. Lead me into your presence in those moments, both in my waking and in my dreams. Amen.*


**Wednesday, April 15** – Read **Philemon 1:1-25**. In Bible times, "redeem" literally meant "buy out of slavery." A slave named Onesimus couldn't buy his freedom, so he ran away, which was a capital crime under Roman law. He then meets Paul and becomes a follower of Jesus, giving his new free life to Christ. In this letter, Paul appeals to Onesimus' owner, Philemon, to show mercy to his former slave.


 Philemon had wealth and property, and did not, in the legal sense, need "redemption." How does Paul point to the spiritual redemption Philemon had found in Christ? From what attitudes and approaches to life did he need to be redeemed?

 Sixty years after this letter was written, an early Christian letter praised a bishop named Onesimus—probably the same man! What were all the ways in which mercy changed Onesimus' life? Which of the two lead characters in this letter do you most identify with? How has God's mercy changed you?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, Thank you for those times when people have asked for mercy on my behalf, even the times I didn't know it. Help me to receive and offer that gift of mercy as I seek to follow you daily. Amen.*


**Thursday, April 16** – Read **1 Peter 1:13-21**. 1 Peter appears to be a letter particularly addressed to new converts to the Christian faith. So, in this section, Peter addresses both how our redemption came about in verses 18 and 19, and how the consequences of that redemption shape the way we live our lives.


 How does Peter explicitly reject any idea that we might be able to redeem ourselves? In whose merciful actions does Peter instead firmly ground our confidence of redemption? Can you name a time in your life when you have felt “redeemed” because someone believed in you or helped you through a difficult time?

 God's mercy does not leave our lives unaltered. How does Peter express God's calling on our lives? In what part(s) of your life is God calling you to greater holiness? How will you respond?

**Prayer:** *Lord God, help me to remember that you have redeemed for a greater purpose. You invite me into a life of holiness where I reflect and live out your love to others who need redemption. May I live that life each day. Amen.*


**Friday, April 17** – Read **Romans 5:1-11**. In his letter to Christians in Rome, Paul lays out how God's forgiving grace acts on our behalf even before we know we need it. That grace is meant to totally reorder our way of living. As you read this powerful passage, think about how it echoes the same themes as the story of *Les Misérables*.

 In what respects are you one of the “ungodly” for whom Jesus died? What feelings or thoughts (if any) do you have that make you want to resist being identified in that way? How much of God's peace and hope need to begin with a feeling and how much must begin with head knowledge and conscious claiming of peace and hope? What incident in your life can you look back on and see the truth of verses 3 through 5? How has that changed you?

 How have you learned to keep your heart and life open so that God can pour his love into your heart through the Holy Spirit? What steps might you take to be more open to God's love?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I open my heart to you today that your peace and joy might fill me. Restore and redeem my heart when I feel powerless. Give me strength for today. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 18** – Read **Jonah 4:1-11**. What did Jonah think was “utterly wrong”? He wanted Nineveh, capital of the brutal Assyrian empire that had terrorized Israel, leveled! But Jonah 3:10 said, “God stopped planning to destroy [the people of Nineveh], and he didn't do it.” Scholar John Walton noted that “Jonah's list of five attributes is practically creedal in the OT in [Exodus 34:6](#); [Nehemiah 9:17](#); [Psalm 86:15](#); [Joel 2:13](#), so it is ironic that Jonah uses them as a basis of his complaint.” A huge mission success—a whole city turning to God—made Jonah furious!

 Why did Jonah run away from God's command at the story's start? Not because he feared the Ninevites, but because he feared God's mercy! “This is why I fled to Tarshish earlier! I know that you are a merciful and compassionate God, very patient, full of faithful love, and willing not to destroy.” This story let Jonah represent all of God's people who wanted to see feared “outsiders” destroyed. Who are the people you think should fall outside the reach of God's mercy?



Scholar John Goldingjay writes about this story, "'Excuse me?' says God. 'You feel sorry for the plant? What about the people in Nineveh? And the animals there?' The book ends with that question. By not telling us Jonah's answer, it leaves us to answer. It's our answer, not Jonah's, that matters." How much of Jonah's spirit lives in your heart? What would it take for you to fearlessly embrace God's mercy toward people you struggle to forgive or care about?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, Jonah thought God's mercy was utterly wrong. But thank you that your Spirit led the writing of this book, and its inclusion in the Bible, to help me see that God was utterly right. Amen.*