

I Heard the Voice of Mercy

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the voice of mercy in a generation that may be deserving of judgment. It delves into the need for repentance, intercession, and seeking God's mercy for America, drawing parallels from historical events and biblical narratives to highlight God's willingness to show mercy when His people humble themselves, pray, and turn from their wicked ways.

Scripture: Ezekiel 22:23, Exodus 32:7, 2 Chronicles 7:12, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Psalm 51:17, James 5:16, 1 Timothy 2:1, Joel 2:12

Topics: "God's Mercy", "Repentance and Intercession"

Description

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Transcript

I want to thank you, Pastor Tim DeLena, for inviting me to share the Word of God today, this special Sunday, right before we go to Plymouth on the upcoming Tuesday, October the 6th, to pray in the very room where the nation began and ask God for a moment of mercy for America. I want to share some scriptures with you today, and then I want to tell you a story about why I hear a voice of mercy in this generation. But before I do, could you join me in prayer, please, today.

Now, Father, I thank you, Lord God, with all my heart for the touch and the anointing of your Holy Spirit. God, you're the only one that can give life to your Word. If you don't quicken it, Lord, then we just increase with knowledge, but we're not transformed by its power.

So, Lord, help us, O God, to allow your Word to find an entrance into our hearts and into our minds, and bring the light, the life, the faith, the hope, God, the understanding of what is in your heart in this generation, and share it with our hearts. And so, Father, we thank you. Thank you, God, for what you're doing in this church, Lord.

Thank you for our pastor. Thank you, Lord, for the great reach that you have through the internet, God, to so many homes, so many lives, so many souls hearing about the goodness of our God. We give you the praise and the glory for all of this in Jesus' name.

I heard the voice of mercy. I want to start with Ezekiel chapter 22. If you do have a Bible, or if you have a device that you can get the scriptures in, I'm reading from the New King James Version, Ezekiel chapter 22.

Now, beginning in verse 23, God is about to speak to the prophet Ezekiel about the state of the nation. Now, the state of the nation in Ezekiel's day was that really it was corrupt from top to bottom, and it was deserving of the judgment of God. There was little or no doubt left about that.

But here's what the Lord says to Ezekiel, beginning in verse 23 of Ezekiel chapter 22. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, say to her, you are a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation. The conspiracy of her prophets in the midst of her is like a roaring lion tearing the prey.

They have devoured people. They have taken treasure and precious things. They have made many widows in her midst.

So those that were supposed to be calling the nation back to God were really using their ministry and their positions for themselves. And they were not drawing the people into a living relationship with God. They were actually making them alienated, or as he said, widows in the midst of the nation.

Her priests, verse 26, have violated my law and profaned my holy things. They've not distinguished between the holy and the unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean. And they've hidden their eyes from my Sabbaths so that I am profaned among them.

Her princes in the midst are like wolves tearing the prey to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gains. So now you have a corrupt prophetic ministry, a corrupt priesthood. Now you have corrupt leadership in many stratas of that society.

And they are ripping people apart instead of bringing them together. They're causing the shedding of blood. They're destroying people.

And they have their hand in the money jar in many cases. You know, it's hidden from the people, but God saw it. Now in verse 28, he said, her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, Thus saith the Lord, when the Lord has not spoken.

So you have a ministry as well that is enforcing or enabling this behavior at all levels. By just, in a sense, giving it the tacit approval of God, even though God is not approving of this behavior. The people now of the land, verse 29, have used oppressions, committed robbery.

Think about our generation when looting seems to be the order of the day, and the oppressions of one group against another seems to be in the surface, or at least always under the surface of our society. They've mistreated the poor and the needy, and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. In other words, there's no compassion anymore for the needs of others.

Everyone's in it for themselves. And, you know, you look at it, you say, this is a nation now deserving of judgment. And I have no doubt there's a lot of scripture that would confirm that judgment is the course that the nation is on.

And so God has taken all the time to show this to the prophet Ezekiel. The next thing should be, step aside, I'm going to judge the nation. But something very unique comes out of the heart of God in verse 30.

There's what he says. So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it. But I found no one.

Can you imagine that? Like, there are so many voices, I'm sure, at this moment in history that are speaking and on the behalf of God. And some of them, no doubt, are calling for judgment. Some of them would be honest enough to search the scriptures, would say, God can't let this continue.

He can't let this absolute debauchery that's going on in this profaning of his name in the earth continue. These are supposed to be the people of God. He had a covenant relationship with these people.

And now what they're doing is bringing his own name into such reproach that surely he's going to judge these people. And I'm sure there were prophetic voices probably speaking these things. But there was one voice speaking something else.

It was the voice of God. And it's amazing. It was a voice that was calling for mercy.

But I want you to hear me on this because nobody could hear this voice. It was like the small, still voice that came to Elijah in that time when he was suffering from depression because of what was going on in the nation. And it was a voice that nobody could hear.

Could you imagine? This is the most religious nation on the face of the earth at this time. God is speaking and nobody can hear him. Nobody.

Not one person in the nation can hear this mercy moment that God has in his heart decided to give to the nation if he can find one person who will agree with him. I want you to think on that for a moment. It's amazing because there's this voice that's crying mercy and nobody can seemingly hear it.

You see, the heart of the law, the scripture tells us clearly the heart of the law is mercy. The heart of all the law that was introduced in the Old Testament is to bring us to the point where we understand that we need the mercy of God. But a secondary and even more important understanding that God's heart's desire is to show mercy to his creation.

In Exodus chapter 32, we see something that of the heart of God that is absolutely profound when you begin to consider it. Now, this is Exodus 32 beginning at verse 7. Now, Moses has been leading the the people out of Egypt into what's supposed to be the promised land. They've been murmuring, they've been complaining, they've stripped off their clothes, they've gotten into immoral behavior, they've built a calf and called this calf their God.

And here's what the Lord says to Moses in chapter 32 of Exodus verse 7. And the Lord said to Moses, Go, get down, for your people who you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They've turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They've made themselves a molded calf and worshipped it and sacrificed to it and said, this is your God, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt.

And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people. Now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them, and I will make of you a great nation. Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God.

So this is the incredible thing. These people have corrupted themselves, the Lord says, I've come down, I've had it with them, I'm finished with them, I'm going to destroy them, and I'm going to make out of you a great nation. Now God says something really interesting, and you have to see this because this conveys the heart of God, and it can affect the way we see God in our generation.

He says three words to Moses, now let me alone. Now in that very statement is the inference from God himself that my heart can be turned by the intercession of even one man. If I have, Moses was considered a friend of God, and God, you have to catch this, that's why I'm going to labor this point a little bit.

God says, I'm going, this is what the people are, this is what I'm going to do, this is God. He makes an absolutely correct statement, he makes a definitive plan on his go-forward strategy, then he says to Moses, now let me alone, and let me do this. And Moses, he starts to speak, he starts to plead with God, and he says, don't be angry with your people that you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand.

Why should it be said of you, why should the Egyptians speak and say he brought them out to harm them, or killed them in the mountains, or consumed them from the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to your people. Moses says, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants to whom you swore by your own self, and you said to them, I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I've spoken of, give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever. And verse 14 is the most amazing verse in the Old Testament, one of the most amazing.

It says, so the Lord relented from the harm he said he would do to his people. It really means that God just changed his mind. God was persuaded, amazing, that one man, one man can stand in the gap, and turn the heart of God away from destroying a whole nation.

This is, this is what the Lord was again looking for through the prophet Ezekiel. He was looking for somebody to stand, because he works in conjunction with his creation. He works in conjunction with his people.

He works in conjunction with our prayers. I don't fully understand that, and probably neither do you. He's God.

He could act outside of us. He doesn't need us to do anything. He's God.

He's entirely complete in himself, but for whatever reason, he chose to, in a sense, intersect his lives with ours, and the working of his hand with our faith, and with our prayers. Isn't that amazing? And yet here he is again in Ezekiel's day saying, I'm looking now for somebody to stand in the gap that I should not have to judge the nation. Mercy is in the center of the heart of God.

That's why the scripture says God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. You remember the prophet Jonah. It's rather a humorous story, but Jonah ran from God, ended up in a storm, goes to this wicked, wicked city called Nineveh, who are known for their violence, and their cruelty, and their godlessness.

And he obeys God, and for three days he travels through the city and says, repent, not repent. He said, judgment's coming in 40 days. It's all over.

You're all going to burn. You're all going to die. And then he sits on a hill and waits for the judgment, and it doesn't come.

And he gets angry, and he said to the Lord, isn't this what I told you would happen? I told you before I went on the journey that I would come and proclaim this message, and the people's hearts would turn. And I know you. He said, I know what you're like.

This is what Jonah said. I know what you're like. When people ask for forgiveness, even though you pronounce judgment, you draw back, and you show your willingness to forgive, because the heart of God is mercy.

Incredible. It's strange sometimes how we can so cry out for mercy for ourselves, and so readily pronounce judgment on others. That's one of the frailties of the human heart.

We'll go home, and we'll say, Lord, forgive me for this, and forgive me for that, and be kind to me for this, and be patient with me here. And then we'll go out in the streets and just demand judgment on all of our enemies. It's the peculiarity, I guess, of the human heart.

I began to hear the voice of God calling for mercy in August of 2019. Pastor Teresa Conlin, my wife, and myself were coming home from our vacation in eastern Canada. She had been reading a book called *The Mayflower*, and she asked me, she said, can we stop in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and I'd like to see this stone called Plymouth Stone, which is purported to be the place where the pilgrims who landed in 1620 first set their foot in America.

And I said, sure, that'd be fine. So we went to Plymouth, Massachusetts, and we saw the stone, and then we went up on a hill that overlooks the colonnade where the stone is housed. We were sitting on a bench when suddenly I heard somebody call my name.

And this young lady said, Pastor Carter, is that you? And I said, yes, it is. And do I know you? She said, no, no, you don't know me, but my husband and I and my mom and dad and four other friends, we've been gathering together with you on Tuesday night for the last two years, and we've been praying with you in the worldwide prayer meeting. My mom and dad own the house over there on the corner, which was not very far from where we were sitting, just a few dozen yards.

And so she said, would you like to see the house? And I initially said, no, thank you. We're busy, and we're on our way home, and it's very, very kind to you, et cetera, et cetera. But my wife is a history buff, and the house was built on this foundation in 1790.

And she said, I'd really like to see that house. So we went to see the house, and when we arrived, the owner who had come to meet us took us in, and his wife was there as well, and they told us the story. They said, two years ago, I had a construction company, and the Lord asked me to sell it and go to Plymouth and buy this house, which was built in 1790 on the foundation, on the very foundation of the first ever house built in America.

The address is lot number one, America. In the original house that was on this portion of land, the 51 surviving pilgrims, now 103 or 104, that's disputed a little bit, but it's around 104, landed the year before, and in that first winter, more than half of them died. So the surviving 51 gathered in that house, not in that house, but in the house that was on that very, basically, in the living room, the 20 by 20 square foot piece of real estate, and they prayed.

They had no strength, they had no power, they had no strategy, they had little resources, they were surrounded by enemies. There was no hope that the promise that they had in their heart could ever be fulfilled without the mercy of God, and they prayed. We don't know exactly what they prayed in that house, but they prayed, and from that little group of people, God birthed a nation.

They had a promise that they were being taken to a place where men and women could worship according to conscience and according to the word of God, without constraints and without being dictated to from the top down, as was the case in the place where they were originally fleeing from. And so here we were in that house, and so these owners and their friends, the folks who prayed with us started to come into the house, and they said, we've been praying with you for two years in New York City at Times Square Church in your worldwide prayer meeting, and the owner said, I started praying a couple of months ago. God, would you make a way that I could meet this man, speaking of me.

So about two months later, I'm sitting on a bench about 30 yards or so, as I remember it, from his house, and only the Lord could have set this up. So we're in this house, and I recognized, and he told me that this is where the pilgrims prayed. This is where, in essence, the spiritual side, at least of America, was born.

In the front yard was the first, there are diagrams depicting the first Thanksgiving in America. It was in that house, and on that lot that the treaty with the Wampanoag and other Native American tribes was signed at that time, and which lasted for 60 years. And so I just said, can we just take a moment to pray? There was an undeniable presence of God in that house.

You simply couldn't, you couldn't deny his presence. And so I was so stirred by the Spirit of God when we prayed, that when I went back to my hotel room that night, I literally couldn't sleep. I was awake at three o'clock or so in the morning, and I began to pray, and I said, Lord, why did you take me to that house? I didn't even know it existed.

I didn't really know the history that was here, but you've obviously led me to that house, and my wife, and what was the, was there a purpose in it? And as soon as I prayed that prayer, this is what the Lord began to speak to me. Now in 2 Chronicles chapter 6, Solomon was dedicating the temple in Israel. Now the temple represented God's presence, represented his purpose for the people of God, his willingness to walk among the people, his willingness to make that particular group of people a praise in the earth to his name.

That was the purpose in a sense of Israel, and of God dwelling in the midst of his people. And Solomon was dedicating this temple, remember the temple where his glory came, the temple where where his presence actually dwelt among his people. And as Solomon is dedicating the temple, he makes this incredible plea to God, among other things when he's praying, he talks about the people in the future.

He said, when they sin against you, for there's no one who does not sin, and you become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to a land far or near, yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive and repent and make supplication, it means they begin to pray towards you in the land of their captivity, whether they're held captive in a near place to this temple or a far place from this temple, and say, we have sinned, we've done wrong, and we've committed wickedness. And when they return to you with all their heart and all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they've been carried captive and pray towards this land, which you gave to their fathers in the city which you've chosen, and toward the temple which I built for your name, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications and maintain their cause, and forgive your people who

have sinned against you. And Solomon says, now my God, I pray, let your eyes be open and your ears attentive or listening to the prayer that is made in this place.

Now in the very next chapter, now Solomon finishes dedicating the temple, Solomon goes home, he's obviously in bed, it's in the middle of the night, and the scripture says, then the Lord in chapter 7 verse 12, it says, the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said to him, I've heard your prayer, and I've chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin and heal their land. Then he goes on to say something powerful, he says, now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive or listening to prayer made in this place.

For now I've chosen and sanctified this house, and my name will be there forever, and my eyes and my heart will be there perpetually. In other words, the Lord was saying to Solomon, if you stray, come back to the place where it all started, come back to the place where you once prayed, come back with humility, come back with repentance, come back with a willingness to admit your failing, and your folly, and your fault, and my heart will still be there. My heart in the sense that moved and gave you a nation, took you from 400 square feet to over 3 million something square miles, took you from being 51 emaciated weak half starved people to a nation of 330 million people, took you to a place from a place of being without resource to where the resource that I gave to you became the virtual envy of the known world.

I took you in your weakness, and in your weakness I became strong, and I was glorified, and the Lord is saying in measure, I fulfilled my word to you, I did what I said I would do, I answered your prayer, but as Solomon once prayed, you strayed, you strayed far away, and were taken captive, and now the pestilence is among you, now there's rising up in your cities, now you see that what the foundations of what I gave you is beginning to crumble, the windows are broken, the roof is leaking, but I'm willing, I'm willing to be merciful. It's that small still voice of God again, in the midst of all the calamity, all the shouting, all the voices, all the opinions, with or without scripture, it's the voice of God that so few can hear, this small still voice that says I'm still willing to show you mercy. I want you to come back to the house where it all began, I want you to fall on your knees in the 20 by 20 square foot room where 400 years ago I answered the prayer of 51 people who gave their all for you so you could be free, so you could worship in freedom, so you could worship according to conscience, which you and I both know is in jeopardy now in our generation, but the Lord says I'm asking you to come back because I have a mercy moment for you, and he spoke to my heart and said I want you to confess the sins of the nation, I want you to start at the beginning and go right through to the present day, and he said I want you to call them by their real names, don't be generic, call them by their names, and then after you've done that, have different people from different persuasions, backgrounds, and cultures ask me for a mercy moment for our schools, our children, our families, our homes, our cities, ask for reconciliation and healing between races, these old wounds that have never been healed in the nation, ask me to do what only I can do, and that's why we're going to Plymouth on October the 6th, there's no other reason, from 7 to 9 p.m eastern time, there'll be various ways you can connect with that meeting, you can come into our website, you can go to itstimetoprayer.org, the instructions will be there as to how, because we anticipate so many people coming in that there's going to have to be different avenues to get through and be part of that live meeting, there'll be people praying there from every walk of life, from some of the highest offices in government in the nation right through to those that maybe are least visible in our culture, as I say from senators to single moms to students, there'll be people of all persuasion that are going to be praying and asking God for

healing, and it's been amazing how quickly this has caught fire in the hearts of people, recognizing that the Lord's about to do something, not exclusively because of this meeting in Plymouth, I just came back last Saturday from a marvelous gathering in Washington called The Return and there was also a prayer meeting led by Franklin Graham at the same time, estimates are in the hundreds of thousands came to pray for mercy in our nation, we are just fulfilling the little part, the piece that God has asked us to do, to go back in that little room that can't fit a whole lot more than 20 to 25 people at the very most and simply say God, we're here in obedience to you and we ask you Lord in Jesus' name to show mercy one more time, give us a mercy moment for America, do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, bring the healing to us that we can't, we can't procure it by any amount of things that we've tried or probably will try, we can do little bits of good but we can't bring the full healing, only you can, give us a go forward strategy for this culture, save our families, deliver our children, my God, we're asking you to do what only you can do, bring back our moral compass as a nation which is so strayed from what you tell us we're to be and how we're to live and how our lives are to be lived so that they bring glory to you.

I hear something, I hear a voice of mercy, I hear this moment in the heart of God where he says you deserve to be judged, now leave me alone but the leave me alone implies is there anybody out there who's still willing to believe that I can show mercy, is there anybody out there who can still hear my heart, is there anybody out there that still knows I'm God, is there anybody who remembers that I took you from nothing and made you a great nation and I can do it again, if you will admit that you've sinned against me, if you will admit that without me you can't go forward, if you will call out to me again, I will be your God and you will be my people and so for those that are listening today I'm asking you to come in and be part of this prayer meeting in Plymouth this coming Tuesday, October the 6th on 7 to 9 p.m. because I hear the voice of mercy and also for those that are listening online this morning and maybe you're not part of the kingdom of God, maybe you feel like your life has fallen so far short of what it should be, you feel so hopeless and down and you're no worse off than those pilgrims were 400 years ago, they were almost dead, they were filled with sorrow, everyone in the room had lost family and friends or spouse or child, they were in a terrible condition, there was no going back and there was no going forward and in their poverty and in their weakness they turned to God and they found a mercy that birthed a great nation and if today you will turn to God in your poverty, if you will turn to God and simply just admit that you're a sinner, don't try to hide it and don't make excuses for it, call it what it is, sin means you're living in a way that is not the way that God has prescribed your life should be lived, you're doing things that God said you shouldn't do and you are not what God says you should be, that's simply called sin, admit you're a sinner, admit you've failed, admit that your life has, you've not lived the way that you should and believe that God in his mercy sent his son Jesus Christ to die on a cross so that you don't have to die and be separated from God for eternity, that's mercy, that was the mercy call of God when the son of God on the cross cried out, father forgive them, that's what he meant, forgive them, that's why he came, that was the cry in the heart of God to forgive even those who had just driven the nails through his hands and feet and mocked him and spit on him and slapped him and put a crown of thorns in his head, you know you'd think that God, wouldn't God judge a people like that, failing to understand that it's mercy is at the center core of God, it's who he is, John the beloved said it in one of his epistles, if you don't love you don't know God for God is love, God is love, there's no other way to describe love but by calling it God and God love, that typifies it, so what does he require of me, you say well you admit that you're a sinner, you believe that Christ died in your place and don't make it complicated, just simply confess with your mouth that he's your Lord and Savior and say God I thank you for loving me, thank you for dying for me, thank you for paying the price for my wrong, thank you for making a way by sacrificing your life that my life doesn't have to be lost forever, that I can become a child of God, that I can be forgiven and in my weakness I can be brought into strength and my dirtiness

can be cleansed and my distance from God can be bridged by that sacrifice of Christ and then my life can become as the pilgrims once did, everything that God destined it to be, then the Bible says you'll become a new creation, the old things will pass away and all things will become new and who can debate but that God answered that prayer for the pilgrims 400 years ago and he will answer your prayer today, if you want to be a believer in Christ, if you want to be forgiven, if you want to know that heaven can be your home when you die, then I'm going to ask you right now, right now, pray this prayer with me, Lord Jesus Christ, I hear your voice, a voice of mercy calling me back home to you, I don't have much to offer you except a heart that says thank you for loving me as messed up as I am, you love me and you died for me, I want to be forgiven and you want to forgive me, so I open my heart to you, I invite you into my life to be my Lord and my Savior, I believe in my heart, I believe that you died for me so that I can live with you forever, and today, right now, I confess you as my Lord and my Savior, I believe that you have forgiven me now, you are my Savior and that heaven will soon be my home forever, in Jesus' name.

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