

(The Lord - Merciful and Gracious) 2. Man-Poor and Needy

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes God's merciful and gracious nature in relation to humanity's condition of being poor and needy, highlighting the importance of recognizing our need for Him.

Duration: 45:54

Scripture: Psalm 109:22, Amos 4:1, Amos 8:4, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Mercy Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the plight of being poor and needy in this world. He explains that those who are in such a condition have a special appeal to the merciful and gracious nature of God. The preacher compares the grace of God to an ocean that seeks to fill the deepest depths of need. He also highlights the importance of recognizing our own poverty and neediness, and the futility of gaining the whole world at the expense of losing our relationship with God. The sermon references Matthew 16:26, where Jesus asks two questions about the value of gaining the world but losing one's soul.

Transcript

The Lord, merciful and gracious. This great secret and revelation that was made to Israel, none others knew that as they knew it. It was all their hope and peace in times of chastening and humbling, that the one who was humbling them was nonetheless merciful and gracious.

And that though his anger endured, it endured but for a moment. He spent his mercy for a lifetime. I told you yesterday that in one study of the word, Pam and I, some years ago, we found cropping up in place after place, in our Old Testaments and really on into our New Testaments, two pairs of words.

And we looked at the first pair of words and it was merciful and gracious. The Lord, merciful and gracious. And it related to the character of God.

And it's he himself who proclaimed his name. This is his self-revelation. Of course, there's been everything so much more.

It was fully revealed, of course, ultimately and finally, in our Lord Jesus. He is God's last word to man. There's no revelation beyond him.

But there it is at the very beginning of things. Jehovah, our God, merciful and gracious. I'm so glad that's the sort of God I have.

I'd been wiped off the face of the earth long before this, had not the God I was serving been the merciful and the gracious one. Now the second pair of words that we found cropping up in great profusion right the way through the Old Testament was the pair of words poor and needy. Jehovah, merciful and gracious.

Man, poor and needy. And this is a divine description of our condition. We are poor and needy.

We're going to see there's a great link between the merciful and the gracious and the poor and needy. But I want to establish that this is what the Word says of us. There are at least, I was counting them up this morning in my young's analytical concordance, which, although it has every last text in the Bible, I carry around with me all over the world.

Of course, if the only edition of Young's analytical concordance is the one that's usually known in ordinary papers, such a big thing that you'd have to pay over weight if you took it on the aeroplane. But it's such a good thing, maybe you know, it's published today in India paper. And even within the baggage limits of air travel, the preacher can take with him Young's analytical concordance.

And I was counting up the number of times where this phrase comes. It's no less than thirty times littered all the way through the Old Testament, the poor and the needy, the poor and the needy, and what God does for man, he does for man as poor and needy. And I don't think you really qualify for the merciful and gracious unless you see yourself to be the poor and the needy.

Now, our reading this morning is going to be some of the references where this phrase occurs. Psalm 40, verse 17. Here David is speaking, But I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me.

There it is. I am what? Poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me. Turn over to Psalm 70, verse 5. But I, he says again, am poor and needy, make haste unto me, O my God, thou art my help and my deliverer.

O Lord, make no tarrying, don't keep me in this plight over long. And the plight I'm in, Lord, is I'm in the position of a poor and a needy one. And then, that's 70, verse 5, 80.

Psalm 80, verse 1. I'm afraid I've got that reference wrong, but we're no lack of references, so we'll pass on to the next one. I don't quite know where that one was meant to be. I've got it, jotted it down.

Turn to 109, verse 22. They're no lack of references, so the missing out of one won't make a lot of difference. Psalm 109, verse 22.

For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. And then, over in Amos. Well, do you know how to find Amos? I'll tell you how.

Keep turning. You know, I never went to Sunday school. I wasn't brought up to Sunday school.

And I was never taught the order of the books of the Bible. I wonder if we teach the children the order of the books of the Bible even now. Apparently, the vogue of recent years in the Church of England is to pity the ignorance of some of the most educated people in the community, and they put a Bible in the pew, and they tell you the page number.

Now, we weren't allowed to do that. We were never told. You were expected to know.

And you fumbled and fumbled, and when you'd gotten to know what it is, you surreptitiously looked at the index. But now, we're told the page. Well, that's a commentary of the current ignorance.

But on the other hand, the minor prophets are a little difficult, only because we haven't really concentrated on getting it fixed in our mind. Amos, chapter 4. Hear this word, ye kind of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, bring and let us drink. And there you have the same poor and needy, and how the world treats the poor and needy.

Of course, in so many references, the poor and needy in the Old Testament are Israel. She's seen as poor and needy, and it's Israel's prophets who pray for her as such. And they see the nations around oppressing God's poor and needy ones.

But what is true of the Israel of the Old Testament is true of the Israel of the New, the Israel of God. Did you know the church is called the Israel of God? And they're seen as poor and needy. And very often, they too suffer at the hands of oppression.

And there's quite a lot about the poor and needy being oppressed. Another one along the same line is Amos. Turn over to chapter 8, verse 4. Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail.

There you have the same references. I said there are some 30 occasions when the poor and needy as a phrase is used. Now, I've had a difficulty in picking out those verses which simply state us as being poor and needy, because that's the point I want to establish.

But it's very difficult to get verses which just state that in isolation. But usually, the phrase is used when it tells of what God does for the poor and needy. Because the merciful and gracious is just that.

He gets always mixed up with the poor and the needy. He almost seems to prefer their company. He does for them that he doesn't seem to do for anybody else.

And therefore, so many of the references, we'll see them later on. It's anticipating tomorrow's subject. First, the Lord merciful and gracious.

Today, the poor and the needy. And tomorrow, what the merciful and gracious does for those that confess themselves to be poor and needy. But I have been able to select a few verses out of the 30 which state the fact in isolation that the writer saw himself and sees us to be poor and needy.

So there's the phrase. Look at it together. I want to take that last phrase first, needy.

And so often you are in a very needy state. It may be through circumstances, adverse circumstances, unhappy circumstances, sickness, bereavement. You're needy.

And very often in our Christian lives, we're so needy. I'm thinking now, I first mentioned our circumstantial lives, but our spiritual lives, we're not getting on too well. We've fallen on our faces.

And we haven't been able to get up. And we're not like some rejoicing in the Lord. We are needy.

Very often this state of need is our own fault. We've got into the situation, we've got in through our own unbrokenness. And we've found ourselves in a situation where people are reacting against us.

Don't blame them. Ask yourself, what in me are they reacting against? Well, they are. And it's not a very happy state to be in.

And you can be in a state of need in your home or at work or elsewhere, really because of your own fault. We're needy. Not always so, but sometimes.

Sometimes we're in a state of need because of the oppression of others. Those that you have to live with aren't always very pleasant to the Christian. And you have a hard time.

Israel did. And their enemies reduced them to the state of being poor and needy. And you may not be always in a very congenial company.

It isn't easy always to be a consistent Christian and not pay the price of the antagonism of others. And therefore you would describe your current position as being needy. Well, it may be the general experiences of life.

Sickness, an accident, hospital, loss, bereavement. Oh, you see. I would describe myself as being needy.

All right? Don't scruple to confess that's your condition, because the one about whom we're speaking specialises in people in that condition. But notice you're not only needy, but what makes it worse, you're poor and needy, which means you're in this state of need, but you have not the wherewithal to get out of it. You're in a situation as one who has no helper.

And this is what is very much emphasised in this phrase. Will you please turn to Psalm 72 again? Psalm 72, verse 12. Verse 12.

This is a wonderful verse. We shall see it later in fuller attention. For he, Messiah, shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

You're in a situation and you have no helper. You can't get out of it. You don't know how to handle things.

You're needy. But you're poor and needy. Psalm 35.

Go back to Psalm 35. You have this aspect again. Emphasise Psalm 35, verse 10.

And here too, you can't keep the Lord out of it, because he always gets involved in the poor and needy. But for a moment, let's just look at the poor and the needy. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him.

The poor from him who is too strong. And you've got yourself into a situation and you don't know how to get out. There's that principle which is too strong for you.

Not only needy, but poor. Nothing by which you can get yourself out. Now, this is certainly the case with regard to sin.

We have unlimited power to commit sin. Any sin we like, we have the ability and the power to commit it. But once you've committed it, you have no means to extricate yourself from its results or from its penalty.

Yes, you commit that thing, you're needy, but now you've done it. You can't get out of the situation caused by sin in relation to God and very often in relation to other people. Not only needy, but poor and needy.

Now, this is very much the case, as I said, with regard to sin and it's illustrated to me in a very familiar scripture. Matthew 16, verse 26. Words that Jesus said.

They're so familiar, perhaps we haven't looked at them closely enough. I know I hadn't until fairly recently. Verse 26.

For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? There Jesus asks two questions. Not one, but two. He's not stating a statement, he's asking two questions.

The first question is this. What is a man profited if to gain the world and the whole of it and its prizes and pleasures he has to part with his soul, his relationship with God? And be assured, the world being what it is, they won't have you unless you're prepared to part with your relationship with God, unless you're prepared to pipe down on your loyalty to Jesus Christ. And sometimes we do it.

What the world seems to offer, its prizes, its popularity, its gains are so desirable that if that's what they ask we're prepared to make the exchange. Know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God. And if you're going to keep in with that crowd and join in with their pleasures and compete for their prizes, because the world is human society organized apart from God, they won't have you unless you're prepared to part with your relationship with God, to lose your soul.

And many a person has suffered great loss in this matter. And Jesus asking the question gives us the answer. What is a man profited? He does gain the whole world but loses his own soul.

And the answer is obvious. It's implied he isn't profited at all. He's made a dead loss.

He's parted with his most precious possession for something that doesn't amount to much at its very best. Right, that's the first question. Now he says, when you've done it, here's my second question.

What can a man give in exchange for the soul that he's parted with? What can he do to reverse it? We all know that if a man buys a new car, it's all completed, it's his, he's paid the money, the cheque's gone over the counter, and he drives that car but once round the block and uses it for some elementary journeys and then dislikes it and he says, please, I want my money back, here's the car. He can't do it except at tremendous loss. That once round the block has cost him hundreds or a thousand pounds.

What can he give in exchange for that money? That car is now not equal to the money that he's parted with. And here you have, in the first case when you make a bad bargain, lose your soul to gain the world and there's nothing in it, there you're needy. But when you discover there's nothing you can do to reverse it, you're not only needy, you're poor and needy.

You have limitless power to commit sin once you've committed it. No power at all to recover what you've lost and to undo its consequences, apart from grace, apart from one who's called our kinsman redeemer, whose great business in life is redeeming that which we've parted with for nothing. And so you see, not only poor but needy.

And you know there are some people who find themselves in a situation, they didn't have got into that situation had they not done that foolish thing, and now they're caught. They're caught! They can't get out of it! It's a terrible situation to find yourself in the case of one who's needy but also poor and needy, who

has no means by which to redeem that which he's pawned. And there are so many situations not only with regard to our initial salvation but many other situations and circumstances.

It's bad you're needy. It's bad you've made that wrong choice. But it's worse when you realise you don't know how to change it! And every attempt on your part only seems to add to your miseries and complications.

Poor and needy, not only needy but poor and needy. I've been reading, it's a good night reading, it's kept me awake too long sometimes, the life of David Livingstone. I never really understood his life and I think there have been very few honest biographies.

But what a mess that man got himself into! And what a mess he got his colleagues into! From one trauma into another, it makes appalling reading. And he made some wrong choices, not necessarily morally, but some ideas. He was a visionary, he was an incurable optimist, he never faced realities, he made his plans and got even the British government involved and missionaries involved only to find they were misconstrued.

Instead of admitting that he'd made a grievous mistake of judgement, he conceived another plan to counter the first mess, only to make that first mess worse. There was no man of greater determination that lived than he. I would have gone stark staring mad if I found myself leading an expedition up the Zambezi with the fond hope that I'd endowed that there was going to be the highway into the heart of Africa for the Gospel and for civilisation, only to be met by great the Murchison Falls and then the Victoria Falls.

He even thought he might get the British government to send out a company of sappers and that would blow away these obstructions and these... Mercifully he wasn't able to sell that one to the government but he sold a lot of things to other people. It's a terrible place. My heart's bled for him when I saw him needy but worse, poor and his best efforts only making things worse.

I haven't finished the story yet. I hope it ends a bit happier. I was very touched when for years they hadn't heard of him.

Civilisation had heard of him. He came home the first time and in a day became the national hero. Then he went back again.

He was more an explorer than a missionary but his exploration was motivated with the desire to open the way to spread Christianity throughout Africa. And this is the story. Not a story of resounding success but a story of determination.

Even along the line of striving man with an iron will. Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction.

Even along the line of striving man with an iron will. His brokers hadn't got iron wills and when they gave in he only despised them. Terrible, terrible thing.

East Africa's got the gospel today only because some men paid the price although there was a great deal of striving. Oh, how much better to be broken enough to admit I have made a false estimate. I never knew there were these rapids there that would impede our steamers and our way rather than devising another way.

Oh, I tell you when the poor and needy confess that's their condition they're always heard by the merciful and the gracious. But we've been in our situations domestic situations, business situations you're in a business situation where the situation is very needy but the trouble is you run out of cash flow. You're not only needy but poor and needy.

What a plight to be in and that is the divine plight in one way or another, at one level or another. Our condition is that of needy ones but not only needy but poor and needy. Those that apart from grace have no helper and are facing an enemy too strong for us to get ourselves out of a situation we've got ourselves in.

I tell you their tears shed. All this world of ours is full of a veil of tears when a man realizes the predicament he's in needy yet poor, poor, poor and needy. As I describe that condition and I don't think I've done it really adequately but as I've described it can you not see that such a situation has a special appeal for the merciful and the gracious? Why? He's made for such a time as this.

He's there for such a situation. And grace being what it is and Jesus being what he is the Lamb being what he is, he cannot but be moved toward the poor and the needy when they confess that is what they are. Someone has said the grace of God is like an ocean of water that ever seeks the greatest depth that it may fill it.

And where there's depth, where there's need when you're in the predicament of being poor and needy there, I want to tell you, there's grace. There, there's the depth that grace seeks to fill. And if there's one person in our conference, more than another who is more needy and more poverty-stricken in their need to that one, Jesus, the merciful and gracious is the more attracted.

You're an end of yourself, maybe. This is quite a company. Who can assess? There's so many different situations.

You're at an end of yourself, I want to take heart. Let the poor and the needy take heart that Jehovah is the merciful and gracious. And your very situation attracts him, draws him to you.

And I think that was the reason why I found it so difficult to find an isolated text which said that we were poor and needy because all the texts that talk about us being poor and needy are texts which tell us what the merciful and gracious is going to do for the poor and needy. Not much good news being told we're poor and needy. But there is good news.

And I tell you what it is that attracts him to us. Not merely the fact that we're in need, but it seems to me that our poverty in that need. That is by far the worst.

To be in a need is bad, but to have nothing you can do, no coin with which to pay for blessing or to pay for your restoration to God or pay or do something well, that's terrible. And when he sees the needy poor and needy, then his bowels of compassion, to use the dear old King James version, are moved toward us. That's why in that great evangelistic passage in Isaiah chapter fifty-five, you have the words, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.

And he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat. Yea, come buy wine and milk without money, without price. You know what that verse is? It's the cry of the water seller.

They didn't have Maine's water supply at Jerusalem. If you hadn't got a well in your backyard from which to get your water supply, you were dependent on the ministrations of the water seller. You know, there are still streets in some of our older cities where you have the street sellers, and I am not sure, there isn't probably a book, the street cries of London town in old times.

Those that were selling fish had their special cry. Those that were selling, well, you know the man who does the, sharpens your scissors. He comes along and he has a cry.

And you come out, the housewives come out with those things that need sharpening. The rag and bone man, what's his street cry? It varies from place to place. They all have their street cries.

And here is the water seller in Jerusalem. The heavenly water seller. And he has a street cry.

Ho! Everyone the thirstiest. Anybody thirsty. And he has a cart, doubtless.

And on the cart, the skin of a pig or some big creature with the orifices tied up, bulging with water. And he is prepared to sell that water for anyone who is thirsty. But this heavenly water seller is different from any earthly one.

Listen to what he says. Everyone the thirstiest come into the waters, and he that hath no money. Apparently he is specializing in that class of person that the earthly water seller would have no interest in at all.

He has no interest in a man who has got no money? He wants their money. But this heavenly water seller directs his appeal to him that has no money. Oh, how that's comforted me.

I haven't any money. I can't point to wonderful times of prayer. And now I've got to give a sermon, and I realize I have been short on the word these days.

I haven't been in it. And, Lord, I haven't got a victorious life to bring you. I have no money! You're the very one that I specialize in.

Because that which I have for you is without money and without price. And I want to tell you, the poor make a special appeal to deity. You're poor.

And help's coming. But the trouble is, you're not poor enough. That's the trouble.

You're poor, but not poor enough. There's something you think you could do. There's something you think could improve your relationship with God.

There's something that would restore the good favour of other people to you. There's some scheme that will help the situation you got in. Oh, yes, you know you're poor, but God says, not poor enough, he that hath no money.

It's God's way. He gives power to the strength, and to him that hath no might, he increases strength. You're weak, but, man, you're not weak enough.

You've still got something else up your sleeve. And really, to confess you've got nothing is hard, but it's this. You have nothing now but Jesus.

But, you know, it's hard to admit it. There are stories told of a man who was a visiting preacher at a church. When he got to the time to preach, he'd fumbled through his Bible and found he'd left his notes behind.

So when he got up to preach on a Sunday morning, he said, I have to confess, my dear friends, that I've left the notes of my sermon behind. So this morning, he said, I'll have to trust the Lord. But he said this evening, I'll have my notes and I hope to do better.

We're not poor enough. And maybe the Lord delays help, delays the answer, to get us to the place of those that have no money. Or it may be, we know that, we are as poor as can be, but we won't admit it.

We won't admit it. Oh, I tell you, it's a moving sight, when a man in a fellowship, he hasn't got a testimony. And he tells us he hasn't got a testimony.

He's only got a problem. He hasn't got the answer. But, you know, that's very moving.

And if it moves us, I tell you, it moves the merciful and the gracious. He's drawn and attracted. Jesus is always on the side of the poor and the needy, when they admit it.

It may be your Christian life is in that state. It may be your circumstances. It may be things which have come upon you.

Yes, it can be on a bed of sickness, maybe an accident. And the devil says, now you're finished. You'll never really get better.

You're needy, but he's telling you you're so poor there's not much chance for you. I want to tell you when you're in that place, you are just the case for him. There's a lovely gospel song of yesteryear, that used to be, I think, in the Young Life campaign hymn book.

We can't lay our hands on it. But I can remember the theme, and the very memory of it touches me and almost makes me cry on the inside. It's called Just the Case for Him.

I can only remember vaguely the first verse. Blind, but longing for my sight. Always groping in the night, hoping for one gleam of light.

Just the case for him. And then there follows another verse. I can't remember, and I'm sure I haven't got that first verse really right.

But another verse on the same line, describing another state of need. Another state of poverty. Another state of misery.

And always ending up, just the case for him. Now this really is a situation. The merciful and the gracious is ever the one who's prepared to take on and take over the poor and the needy when they confess that fact.

And so it is, whereas we have this phrase, the poor and the needy, it's very difficult to isolate it from the many other verses where the merciful and the gracious gets involved with the poor and the needy and deals with those that have been oppressing them. For Israel's poverty and need was very largely the result of her enemies. And so was David's, because he was always declaring himself poor and needy, very often because of the activity of his enemies.

He undertakes a lot. He takes on your situation. He ransoms by his blood and restores to you that which you've parted with for a thing of naught.

That's what it means, redeemed. And the word redeemed is a very special word in the Bible. It gets its meaning from the Old Testament.

And there was an Old Testament enactment under the law of Moses that if a man through poverty had had to part with his family estates, which had been in his family for years, but he had to part with them, there was one proviso written into every contract under the law of Moses that the next of kin, if he was willing and able, always had the right to redeem what his poverty-stricken relative had parted with. A man might not only part with his family estates because of his poverty, he might sell himself into slavery, yet he could always be redeemed if there was a next of kin, able and willing. The buyer could never say, no, I bought it forever.

No, always this proviso. It's called goel. And this is the word redeemed in the Old Testament.

You've got to remember it, otherwise you won't understand its sweetness. Isaiah has much about the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer, but not until after chapter 40. Before chapter 40 is the call to repent, the declaration of the judgments that will fall upon them if they fail to repent.

When you come to chapter 40, the Prophet sees them as already being taken into captivity, though in actual fact it had not yet happened, but in his vision it had. And then Jehovah comes into view as their goel, as their Redeemer, the one who has the right to redeem that which they've parted with, their land, yes, but themselves. What shall a man give in exchange for that which he's parted with? I want to tell you, it isn't all despair.

There's a goel. There's only a Holy One, your Redeemer. And the poor and needy, there's hope for us all.

Only identify yourself as one. Not only needy, but poor. Hear him say, and he that hath no money, you come to me.

Wherefore do you spend your labor for that which is not bread, and your wages for that which profit is not? Why do you try and think up your own way out? Come to me in full and frank confession, and you'll find, in a degree you never really anticipated, that Jehovah Jesus is the merciful and the gracious one. Let us pray. You're right when you sing.

The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you. I never thought you were that sort of God. My conscience always told me you were the God with the big stick.

But I see you're not. You're the merciful and the gracious that did not spare thine only Son that gavest him for a world undone. And free with that blessed one thou givest all.

Lord, we want to confess. Oh, help us to be straight and honest about it. That we are.

The poor and needy is a lovely phrase. It slips off the tongue so easily. But Lord, it's a bitter experience when it comes home.

Our need and our complete incapacity to cope with it, we're poor. But thank you, Jesus. You're the God of the poor and the needy.

You're on their side. You always get involved in their affairs, if we will let thee do that. So we thank you, Lord.

We thank you for the comfort of thy holy word. I know some of us are in difficult situations. Oh, help us to unburden ourselves.

Help us to offload our situation at thy dear feet. Lord, if it would help anybody, even share it with another, give us grace to seek out a beloved friend. But Lord, you're our beloved friend.

We don't really have to look around for a man to help us. We want to thank you, Jesus. Our kinsman redeemer.

Finding, restoring that which is lost. Forgiving the messer. And in an amazing way, in varying degrees and levels, amassing the mess.

And give us that testimony in these days. The testimony of the ransomed of the Lord. The poor and the needy, who found their release in Jesus.

And his work for them at Calvary. We ask it in thy dear name. Amen.

The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you. The greatest thing in all my life The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you. I've always been longing for you.

In a church in America, the pastor of which is a beloved friend, and they were singing many choruses, but this one especially came home to me. Because I knew what God had given me to share with them. I said, that's it.

They're going to have an opportunity of a new knowledge of you. The greatest thing. And that, as I said before, which distinguishes one Christian from another, if there is a distinction, it is that some have learned, a little more deeply perhaps than others, what their God's like.

And know what to do with their needs. And are learning to do it quickly. The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you.

The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you. I've always been longing for you.

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