

2009 Holiday Sermon Series
“Spoiled Rotten or Spoiled to Serve”
Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church
November 22nd, 2009

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Today, we will begin a series of sermons that I’m calling the “2009 Holiday Sermon Series”. We’re moving into the holiday season, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years; therefore, the Holiday Sermon Series...

We’ll begin this series by looking at the holiday of Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is just a few days away. During this holiday we celebrate as family and friends the time that America was discovered and our roots began. It’s a holiday where there is a lot of eating involved too; along with football and shopping the day after for Christmas!

Here are a few of the **traditions** we have during the Thanksgiving Holiday...

- Waking up to the Thanksgiving Day Macy’s Parade
- Family and Friends Coming Over
- Football
- Smelling the food
- Eating the food
- Leftovers the entire season remaining
- Shopping the day after

As I was preparing this message, I knew I had to come up with a title. The progression of titles went like this...

- “I am Blessed, Therefore I Serve”
- “Blessed to Bless Others”
- “Blessed to Bless”
- “Blessed to Serve”
- Then.... The reality came forth... we are “Spoiled to Serve”.

As a Christian nation, and I do believe that is what we are; we are extremely spoiled. We're spoiled as Americans and we're spoiled as Christians. Yes, we do have the extreme poor in America, and I'm not denying that... but in the area where we live on the Eastside of Cincinnati; we're predominantly blessed! We've got shelter, food, comfort, etc. We're blessed. And most of us; we have more than we really need. We have cars, pools, boats, multiple TV's, shoes galore, clothes galore, DVD players, PS3's, etc., etc., etc., ...

I praise God daily for the freedom that we as Americans have; freedom to vote, to voice our opinions, to choose our lifestyles, to pick our own places of education, to wear what we want, and the list goes on. We are a free nation! And much of this is due to the fact that thousands of men and women have given their lives in the armed services so that we can maintain the ways of freedom that we have. To each of you we say thanks!

As a Christian, I am also thankful for the freedom that we have to express our worship to God; a freedom that not all people groups in the world have. I experienced this first hand while in the Middle East a few months ago. There, as well as many other places around the globe, it is against the law for many of their citizens to serve God and worship Him publically. A freedom that we too often just take for granted.

May we never forget the freedom we have as Americans; and we may never ever forget the freedom we have as Christians to worship God. And with this freedom comes responsibility; a responsibility to show the love of God to those who have not yet experienced it. To be the hands and feet of Christ's love.

We have freedom to serve!

Don't get me wrong; I know that we have needs too. I realize that many of you hurting with your finances and need benevolence; but even still – we are blessed! We are blessed as a nation to be able to serve God in freedom. We have the choice to choose our own type of worship, our education, our clothes, our lifestyles, etc. We have freedom and we are blessed! In fact, we are spoiled!

We have two choices... we can either be Spoiled Rotten or we can be Spoiled to Serve.

“Spoiled Rotten” vs. “Spoiled to Serve”

Stats

Take a look at these statistics I found concerning how blessed we are as a nation and Christians within this nation compared to others around the world.

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ISSUES OF POVERTY

According to www.globalissues.org

- [The new poverty line of \\$1.25 a day was recently announced by the World Bank \(in 2008\). For many years before that it had been \\$1 a day. But the \\$1 a day used then would be \\$1.45 a day now if just inflation was accounted for.](#)
- [At least 80% of humanity lives](#) in poverty
- **36.4 million Americans** lived in poverty as of 1995. Of which, 40 percent were children.
- Some 18 million people a year or 50,000 per day - are dying due to poverty-related causes: in total 270 million people, most of them women and children, have died as a result of poverty since 1990.

ISSUES OF HOMELESSNESS

According to www.homelessworldcup.org

- An estimated 100 million people worldwide are homeless. *Source: United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 2005*
- In the USA as many as 3.5 million people experience homelessness in a given year. *Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2007*
- 1.37 million of the total homeless population in USA are children under the age of 18. 40% are families with children, 41% are single males, 14% are single females. *Source: International Journal of Psychosocial Research, 2008*
- The homeless rate in the United States per capita is one of the lowest if not the lowest in the World. Our homeless rate in the US is less than three tenths of one-percentile.

We are an OUTWARD FOCUSED CHURCH...

QUESTION: "What Does That Mean?"

Comparisons of an Outward vs. Inward Focused Church

The Key Word = FOCUSED..... what are we focused on?

Inward Focused:	Put the attention on a building.
Outward Focused:	Put the attention on people.
Inward Focused:	Desires to have a large, healthy congregation.
Outward Focused:	Desires to have a healthy community.
Inward Focused:	Prays, "Lord bless us!"
Outward Focused:	Prays, "Lord bless them!"
Inward Focused:	Will have powerful prayer meetings.
Outward Focused:	Will have powerful prayer meetings and then go out and do something.
Inward Focused:	Prays, "Lord, send them in from the North, South, East and West."
Outward Focused:	Prays, "Lord, show me how to serve them in the North, South, East and West."
Inward Focused:	Raises lots of money for programs.
Outward Focused:	Raises lots of money for hurting people.
Inward Focused:	Prays for their missionaries to be blessed.
Outward Focused:	Prays for their missionaries to be blessed and then blesses them personally.
Inward Focused:	Enjoys doing church.
Outward Focused:	Enjoys being the church.
Inward Focused:	Is church minded.
Outward Focused:	Is Kingdom minded.
Inward Focused:	Says, "Here am I, feed me."
Outward Focused:	Says, "Here am I, send me."
Inward Focused:	Spoiled Rotten
Outward Focused:	Spoiled to Serve

We are blessed, we have received God's mercy... therefore, we must use this Mercy and Blessings for His the Kingdom. Our Blessings must become FLUID...

Matt 5:7

7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

THE FLOW OF MERCY

Let's take a look at it from four perspectives.

I. The Downward Flow of Mercy: Mercy Offered

One of the first things we need to know about mercy is that it is available to all people.

Just as **Matthew 5:45** says, *"He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*

God does not reserve His mercy for those who deserve it. In fact, if anyone deserved it, it would not be mercy, but payment or obligation. Mercy is showing great concern for someone in need, having compassion, sympathy, or pity. Mercy is used to describe one of God's attributes. Eph.2:4 says He is "rich in mercy." The Greek word for mercy, *eleos*, is used in relation to misery and its relief. Grace is God's free gift displayed in the forgiveness of sins. Grace is extended to men as they are guilty. Mercy is extended to them as they are miserable (ISBE Bible Dictionary). Many people do not realize that God's kindness is available to them in the midst of their misery. God has great concern for those in need- esp. those who are suffering. He cares about people who are hurting, and He is willing to help them if they will let Him.

II. The Inward Flow of Mercy: Mercy Received

When someone asks God for mercy, they are really asking for relief from whatever misery they are in. Mercy is not synonymous with grace, but it certainly relates. I've heard some people tell about how miserable they felt when they became aware of their own sinfulness. As they realized how dark their own heart and life had become without God, they came to a point of crying out for relief. God's relief came in the form of grace and forgiveness that is available through faith in Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross.

Now, I do not believe that God's mercy is only available to those who have responded to His grace. Remember, He makes His rain fall on the just and the unjust. However, without receiving the free gift of God's grace, mercy may only be a temporary fix. Without forgiveness and a meaningful relationship with God, misery will eventually become perpetual- if not in this life then certainly in the next. But with God's grace and forgiveness, misery becomes momentary.

-As Paul said in **2 Corinthians 4:17-18, 17** *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

So both those who follow Christ obediently and those who do not may be recipients of God's mercy if they ask. But the favor and blessing of God can only rest on those whose hearts belong to Him.

Now the central truth of this beatitude is found in these last 2 principles. God's favor and blessing, along with His endless mercies are given to those who habitually show mercy to other people.

III. The Outward Flow of Mercy: Mercy Extended

Blessed are the merciful.... The merciful are those who not only receive mercy, but who have also learned how to pass it forward to others. Here are four marks of the merciful that will help us see how mercy should flow out of our lives to others.

HOW MERCY SHOULD FLOW OUT OF OUR LIVES TO OTHERS

1. Merciful people help hurting people (divorce, bereavement, abuse, shut-ins, etc.)

James 2:14-17 (The Message)

"Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, 'Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!' and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?"

These are people who might be living in misery or are suffering in some way. When we come alongside them and help them find comfort and relief, we are showing God's mercy to them. Mercy may come in the form of a smile, a handshake, a hug, kind words, a kind act, taking meals to people, pulling someone's weeds, visiting people, praying for them, or alleviating their pain and suffering in a way that values them and honors God. Merciful people help those who are hurting.

2. Merciful people are patient with those who struggle.

Galatians 6:1-2

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

If we've been serving the Lord for awhile, sometimes we can forget all of the times that we have struggled and came up short. Aren't you glad God is patient with you? Let's be merciful and show the same grace and patience for others who are still fighting their way free of the stuff of life or just struggling to keep their heads above water. Help them out. Pray for them. Walk with them! That is mercy!

3. Merciful people are kind, even to their enemies.

Jesus asked in **Matthew 5:46**: *"If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?"*

The question is rhetorical. Jesus wasn't saying that no reward would come. He was revealing one of the truest tests of a Christ follower: How do you treat those who mistreat you? Merciful people will repay evil with good so God will receive the greatest glory and honor.

4. Merciful people are forgiving people.

-Colossians 3:13 says *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*

-Robert Schuller tells a story about Bernice Schug. He met Schug when she needed work and they hired her as a housekeeper. She was a lovely woman, showering the Schuller's with love and poppy-seed rolls. But he says that no one knew of her hidden hurt. One day she came to Schuller and said, "Bob, I was reading the bulletin and I noticed that you are having a guest speaker next Sunday who was a Kamikaze pilot." Schuller nodded telling Bernice that this particular pilot had a tremendous story about finding Jesus. "That may be true, but my boy was killed in WWII by a Kamikaze pilot and I don't think I could handle it." Schuller understood and told her he didn't think it would hurt her to miss one

Sunday. Schuller writes: "The next week the Japanese pilot shared his story. His love and gratitude for Jesus shone from his black eyes. You could feel the love and release he had found. People were moved by his testimony. And when the service was over, I walked with him back down the aisle to the rear of the Church. Suddenly, as we approached the last pew, an older woman stepped out directly in our path. She stood firmly in front of the Kamikaze pilot and blocked his exit. She looked him squarely in the eye and said, "My son was killed by a Kamikaze!" It was Schug. We all held our breath as she continued, "I have seen how God has forgiven you your sins, and tonight, for the first time in 40 years, I've allowed Him to forgive mine. Will you forgive my hatred for your people?" With tears in his eyes the young pilot said, "Will you forgive me for what my people did to you?" She threw her arms around this little Japanese man and they stood there holding each other, both of them crying and crying." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

One of the reasons why I want to show compassion to others is because God has been compassionate to me! I'm so thankful that my sins have been forgiven! I'm grateful that I have a loving relationship with God through Jesus. I'm so thankful that I don't have to spend eternity in the lake of fire. I'm so grateful for God's mercy in my life that I want to extend that same mercy to others. I urge you: Carry out an act of mercy in someone's life this week. Not because they deserve it. . . . Not simply because they showed you mercy. . . ., but because you want to be more like your Father in heaven, showing mercy to all without favoritism. If we will allow mercy to flow out from us to others, it will change our lives and many lives around us. This is better than the world's idea Paying It Forward! It's better than building up good karma. Let's look at this last perspective on mercy and the reward that comes from living in the flow of mercy.

IV. The Reciprocal Flow of Mercy: Mercy Rewarded

Merciful people are only merciful because they themselves have received mercy. However, the more they allow mercy to flow in and out of their lives, the more it will be available to them.

-In **Luke 6:38**, Jesus was speaking of mercy and forgiveness, and He said, "*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*"

We aren't told specifically who will be doing the pouring, but the source will certainly be upward. God is the God of mercy and will pour out His mercy on those who are merciful. However, as several Scriptures attest, God also moves people to give more mercy to the merciful as well.

-**Proverbs 16:7** says, "*When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.*" I don't pretend to know how God does these things, but I do know that He rewards attributes like mercy.

Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.

Luke 6:38

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So..... What are we going to do about it?

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The Vision of EASTGATE is to Make an IMPACT, we do this by Loving, Growing and Serving! Let's look at the "S" in Serve in a different way today, this Thanksgiving Sunday...

Since we are Spoiled to Serve...

1 – Submit

We must submit to the commands of God to be the hands and feet of Christ; serving one another and showing the Love of Christ in practical ways. We must submit to His Word and Truth and realize that if we don't – it's disobedience. Either we submit, or we choose to disobey God! It's a command, we must submit!

Luke 6:36

Our Lord said, *"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father is also merciful."*

2 – Sacrifice

We must make the decision and decide now to serve someone. You know that there are going to be needs around you. There will ALWAYS be someone in life that has it worse than you do. Guaranteed! So, make the decision in advance that you're going to serve, bless, and help someone in a very tangible way. You must do this in advance; otherwise you may talk yourself out of it. We emotionally say, "Yes! I'll do it!" after hearing a rousing sermon on Sunday morning... then we see the need when we get out there and say "forget it". Submit to the Word of God then commit to make the sacrifice, no matter what it might be. Don't let the flesh talk you of it.... THEN....Do it!

1 Peter 4:10 – 11

"Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!"

3 – Seek

Find someone to bless and do it! Look for nothing in return; just do it! Find a hole in someone's life and fill it! Don't pray about it – just do it! God's already commanded you to do it, why pray about something He's already told you to do! He's not going to change His mind – just do it!

James 2:14-17 (The Message)

"Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, 'Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!' and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?"

Conclusion:

NOW.....

Let's practice what we preach... let's do it!

Last Sunday, we gave you a bag to fill with groceries.... Now, we'll take them to our neighbors, our friends, those in need. We'll take them, serving others, because we are Spoiled to Serve!

You Watch... You Wait... You'll SEE!