

## THE BIG IDEA: Mercy attracts people who need mercy.

### The Take-Off

Let's begin this morning with a quick recap from last week:

We are all sinners

Sin has turned all of our lives into ugly yards (like mine!)

Snow covers up that ugly yard

Mercy goes one step further - it transforms the sinful heart and makes it like snow

So, we blew it (that's the bad news), but God can redeem it (that's the good news)!

We need to understand both, because without the bad news, the good news would just be ... news.

Quickly forgotten, irrelevant, tossed aside in favor of the next big thing.

But what we'll learn today is that the transformation that comes from God is very attractive.

People who want to change but can't change are open to investigate what may help them change.

Need proof? Gym memberships in January. Teeth whitening infomercials late at night. Politics.

We're all quick to attach ourselves to something that we think can improve our lives.

So the first verse of our text really shouldn't surprise us.

Turn to **Mark 3:7-12 (NLT)** and let's take a closer look at what's going on:

### 1. Mercy attracts people

- a. **Mark 3:7** / Jesus went to a lake and a bunch of people followed Him
- b. What's the big deal about the lake? About Jesus?
- c. When you take the gospels in chronological order, you find that this is at the beginning of Jesus' 2nd year of public ministry
- d. It's often called the "year of popularity"
- e. To this point, Jesus has:
  - Cleared the temple ending unfair money exchanges
  - Changed water into wine at a wedding
  - Met a Samaritan woman at a well
  - Healed an official's son
  - Healed an unclean man and Peter's mother-in-law
  - Healed a leper and a couple of paralytics
  - Healed the man's deformed hand in the verses right before ours
- f. That is a lot of mercy, and that's what attracted the crowd
- g. See, **mercy attracts people**
- h. **Verses 7-8** tells us where they came from and why they came
- i. From all over because they had all heard the news
- j. It also tells us how many - a "vast" number (verse 9 hints that it was enough to crush them)
- k. The sledding hill in Random Hills is ALWAYS full of sledders when it first snows
- l. Snow has an attractive quality to it that draws people together and God's mercy is the same
- m. Mercy attracts people

### 2. People need mercy

- a. I'm going to make a statement now that you can "amen" with confidence and volume: God is smart
- b. Not only does mercy attract people, but **people need mercy**
- c. That means that God has put together a winning combination!
- d. His mercy draws people to the very thing that people need
- e. So the question we have to ask is, "Why doesn't it seem to work?"
- f. If mercy attracts people and people need mercy, then why aren't people finding mercy?
- g. Let me answer it with the Big Idea and then I'll explain: **Mercy attracts people who need mercy.**
- h. It's one thing to agree with the 2 points about mercy attracting people and people needing mercy
- i. But God brings those 2 truths together in our lives all the time
- j. And that can be overwhelming...

### 3. Are you guarded or prepared?

- a. We find something interesting in **verse 9** - Jesus made sure the crowd wouldn't crush Him
- b. In the Greek, the words for "crowd" and "crush" are the same
- c. The Greek word is "thlebo" (like Tebow but with an l thrown in!)
- d. It means "to press (like grapes), press hard on, narrow, contracted, to trouble, afflict, distress"
- e. Here are some of the other verses in the NT that contain this word:
  - Matthew 7:14 / the way is very narrow and the road is difficult
  - 2 Cor. 1:6 / Even when we are weighed down with troubles
  - 2 Cor. 4:8 / We are pressed on every side by troubles, but are not crushed
  - 2 Cor. 7:5 / When we arrived in Macedonia, there was no rest for us. We faced conflict from every direction, with battles on the outside and fear on the inside
  - 1 Thess. 3:4 / Even while we were with you, we warned you that troubles would soon come
  - Hebrews 11:37 / Some dies by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went around wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated.
- f. If we're honest, those verses sound like the things we want to keep our distance from, and that is why the plan of God to use mercy through us to attract people to us often fails: being mercy givers starts to feel like work.
- g. It's the same reason we stop playing in the snow.
- h. **[Video clip / Christmas Story - Bundled up]**
- i. Sometimes snow is a lot like work and so we either decide it's easier to just look at it or we decide to get so bundled up in order to stay warm that we can't even move
- j. Ask yourself: **are you guarded from people or prepared for people?**
- k. Jesus prepared for the crowd - He had the disciples get the boat ready, not so He could escape the crowd but so that He could handle the crowd

#### The Landing

Right now, the mercy in our body is attracting SNOW many people and we have the opportunity to prepare for them  
Some churches choose to guard themselves from the crushing crowd, but we want to prepare for it  
We want to prepare servant leaders, to empower Community Group leaders  
We want to see everyone bringing offerings generously to God so they can be distributed generously through us  
We have an opportunity to share the mercy of God next week in The Big Give - we already have 21 forms  
Our goal was 15 and we have another week to go  
Jesus used a boat to handle the crowd and now He wants to use US!  
Let's pray