

In Praise of God's Mercy"  
Psalm 86  
(Preached at Trinity, November 13, 2011)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Jesus told a parable of a certain king who came to call his servants to account. One servant owed 10 thousand talents. A Jewish talent of gold was about 200 lbs of gold. In today's dollars that would be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$50 billion dollars.
  - A. Unable to pay this impossible amount the king commanded the servant, his wife and children, and all that he had to be sold.  
The servant fell on his face begging mercy. The merciful king was moved with compassion and forgave his servant the entire debt.
  - B. The servant then went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii. A denarius was equal to a day's pay. At \$100 a day the servant would have owed him about \$10,000 dollars. A large sum, but mere pennies compared to the \$50 billion he had just been forgiven of. The wicked servant took him by the throat and demanded immediate payment. When payment couldn't be made he ordered the servant thrown into prison until the debt was paid.
  - C. Of course, the story ends with the wicked and unforgiving servant delivered to be tortured until the last farthing was paid.
2. Of course, this parable speaks to the heart of unforgiveness but also to the small value placed upon mercy. **Psalm 86** is a psalm exalting God's wondrous mercy.
  - A. The definition of mercy is not receiving that which we are due. But it's more. Mercy is the display of God's compassion upon fallen humanity. Every human being deserves to be in hell at this very moment. In fact, every breath the lost man breathes draws him nearer to the flames. For multitudes the flames are lapping at the door.
  - B. And in the mercy of all mercies, God offers us full pardon of an infinite debt—a debt that could never be paid. This is the Good News of the Gospel—that we can find full pardon through Christ; that we can find full restoration with God. And most people yawn and say, "No thanks." And even worse, some people shout with anger, "Away with Him, I don't need any Savior."
3. But for those who have found the mercy of God they know they have found the greatest of all gifts and their hearts overflow with gratitude.
4. This is the essence of **Psalm 86**. It is designated as a "Prayer of David." It is only psalm designated such in the Third Book of the Psalter. Having experienced God's wondrous mercy David offers up this great prayer to God
5. We can divide it into 4 sections
  - I. David's Petition – **Verses 1-6**
  - II. David's Proclamation – **Verses 8-10**
  - III. David's Praise – **Verses 11-13**
  - IV. David's Peace – **Verses 14-17**

I. David's Petition – **Verses 1-6**

- A. At the heart of David's prayer is a plea for mercy  
**Psalm 86:3 KJV** - "Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily."  
 1. David is praying as a believer, yet he sees himself in need of God's mercy  
 2. All men are in need of God's mercy
- B. Recognizing his great need David humbles himself before God - **Verse 1**  
**Psalm 86:1 KJV** - "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I *am* poor and needy."  
 1. All of God's dealings with us are by way of mercy. David prays, "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me." But then he adds, "For I am poor and needy." In other words David confesses he has nothing to offer God.  
 2. This is the way all men must come to Christ – empty handed.  
 a. Jesus declared in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."  
 b. *Rock of Ages:*  
 Not the labors of my hands  
 could fulfill thy law's commands;  
 could my zeal no respite know,  
 could my tears forever flow,  
 all for sin could not atone;  
 thou must save, and thou alone.  
  
 Nothing in my hand I bring,  
 simply to the cross I cling;  
 naked, come to thee for dress;  
 helpless, look to thee for grace;  
 foul, I to the fountain fly;  
 wash me, Savior, or I die.  
 3. God hears the prayers of the lowly – and only the lowly  
**James 4:6 KJV** - "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."
- C. Then David adds **Verse 2** which seems out of place  
 1. After declaring his poverty in **Verse 1** he declares his holiness in **Verse 2**  
**Psalm 86:2 KJV** - "Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy"  
 2. We can see this is several ways:  
 a. First, this word is not the usual word translated holy. This word points to one who is faithful, pious – it fits perfectly with the phrase that follows:  
**Psalm 86:2 KJV** - "save thy servant that trusteth in thee"  
 b. David isn't declaring himself to be sinless, but one who is totally committed to God.  
 c. As we cry out for mercy it is not improper to declare our trust in God—God and God alone.  
 3. The best way to read **Verse 3** is to remember David is praying as a believer. He is claiming God to be his God—"my God" and he is declaring himself to belong to God—"I am holy"  
 4. There is another element here. As a lost person we can claim nothing of ourselves but as believers we can appeal to our holy character

- a. David is praying, “O Lord, I am yours and you have made me holy”
- a. Jesus taught that it is the merciful that received mercy  
**Matthew 5:7 KJV** - "Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."  
**Matthew 6:14-15 KJV** - "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup> But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."
- b. This is not appealing to any merit of ourselves but the evidence of Christ’s work in us.
- 4. As God’s people we can pray with assurance as we see the evidence of God’s mercy upon us.
- 5. David is buttressing his prayer with arguments  
 Spurgeon: “God requires us to plead with Him, and to bring forth our strong reasons because this will show that we feel the value of the mercy. When a man searches for arguments for a thing, it is because he attaches importance to that which he is seeking.”
- D. David offers further arguments. He reminds God of His willingness to bestow His mercy upon those who seek it.  
**Psalms 86:5-7 KJV** - "For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. <sup>6</sup> Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. <sup>7</sup> In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me."
  - 1. This should be the great comfort for every lost man seeking Christ  
 "For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."
  - 2. God is good and ready to forgive. He pardons quickly. Stop having hard thoughts about God. He is plenteous in mercy.
  - 3. The best place a person can be is to see himself in need of mercy and in Christ he will find it abundantly.

## II. David’s Proclamation – **Verses 8-10**

- A. There are none to compare with God  
**Psalms 86:8 KJV** - "Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord; neither *are there any works* like unto thy works."
  - 1. Even if the heathen idols were true gods none would be able to dispense mercy like God
  - 2. Sadly, most people live their lives worshipping their idols deceiving themselves that they will find mercy in the end
- B. David’s great proclamation is that all nations will come and worship and glorify God
  - 1. This has certainly proved a prophesy that has found fulfillment
  - 2. God is worshipped by every nation, kindred and tongue

3. This is the great proclamation upon the lips of God's people  
**1 Chronicles 16:24 KJV** - "Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations."  
**Psalm 9:1 KJV** - "I will praise *thee*, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works."
4. Multitudes have discovered the marvelous works of God in Christ  
**Psalm 118:22-23 KJV** - "The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner. <sup>23</sup> This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes."

### III. David's Praise – Verses 11-13

Because of God's wondrous mercy David's lips were filled with praise

**Psalm 86:12-13 KJV** - "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. <sup>13</sup> For great *is* thy mercy toward me"

- A. Notice that David again refers to God as "O Lord my God."
  1. David is rejoicing in God's mercy towards him
  2. It is one thing to ponder the attributes of God in the abstract  
 God is good, loving, just, merciful—altogether lovely  
 But do these things have meaning in your life? Is He lovely to you? Have you personally experienced His love, His mercy, His goodness?
- B. These are the things that draw praise from our hearts  
 "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart"
  1. Remember, the Hebrew word for "praise" is תָּרַחַח which also carries the idea of gratitude or thanksgiving
  2. It is our gratitude for God's tender mercies in our life that carries over into praise and worship. The greater the gratitude the greater the praise.  
**Luke 7:44-48 KJV** - "Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. <sup>45</sup> Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. <sup>46</sup> My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. <sup>47</sup> Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. <sup>48</sup> And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."

### IV. David's Peace – Verses 14-17

- A. David was a man continually in the presence of danger  
**Psalm 86:14 KJV** - "O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them."
  1. He was continually assaulted by wicked men
  2. They hated him and were united together to take his life
- B. God was the ever present source of David's comfort and confidence. God's mercy upon David was always sufficient – **Verses 15-17**
  1. No suffering is ever so great that the mercy of God cannot touch and cannot comfort.
  2. God's mercy will always be sufficient

**Conclusion:**

1. Do you know of the tender mercies of God? Do you meditate upon them often? Are you guilty of being forgetful and of not giving God the praise that He deserves? **Verse 11** speaks loudly to each of us—  
**Psalm 86:11 KJV** - "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."  
"O God, help my thoughts to be ever on you. Help me to walk with you. Unite my heart with you that we might be one. Give me an undivided heart."
2. If you have not called upon Christ as your Savior you must call upon His mercies.
  - A. Most people think they are good enough and that they should get what they deserve from God. We DO NOT what we deserve. We don't want justice. We need mercy!
  - B. John Calvin: "The only haven of safety is in the mercy of God, as manifested in Christ, in whom every part of our salvation is complete."
  - C. He is rich in compassion to those who call upon Him but there will be no mercy for those who do not seek Him.

