

MERCI MERCI
Communion Meditation –June 5, 2016 –Matthew 5: 7
The Church of the Covenant

The experience of Haiti and mission trips always makes a HUGE difference in my spiritual life. It is why I love them so. The rugged, barren countryside that is the mountainous region around LaCroix and the New Testament Mission, where I and a mission team were at the beginning of this April, is rather “unforgiving”. There is not a lot of mercy there. Life is tough and hard and harsh in a way that we Americans do not fully comprehend. It is very hard to relate to a life where there is no certainty that there will be food, on your table, if you even have a table, for your children that day.

They speak Creole in Haiti, which is sort of an amalgam of French and native dialect. I don’t speak French but a lot of Creole words I can at least discern are similar to if not the same as French words. “Merci” means “thank you”; “Merci bou coup” means thank you very much. This exhausts my knowledge of Creole! You’ve just heard my entire vocabulary! And I believe I am correct but the root word for “merci” in French is also the root word for “mercy” in English. “Mercy” --unmerited favor we do not deserve but receive only as a gift of grace from God. A gift we receive we do not deserve – “Merci”.

My assignment was not a glamorous one in Haiti. It was to pass out deworming pills to all of the children in the schools in the New Testament Mission. I estimate we passed out 3,000 deworming pills over the course of that week in LaCroix and in mountainous villages in the area. We also passed out Bibles along with the deworming pills. And then we would pass out a lolly-pop. I asked that we would please pass out the bitter tasting deworming pills the size of horse pills (often times the pills looking twice the size of the children we were giving them to!) FIRST, then to be followed by the lollypops, and only THEN to be followed by the Bibles. My point was I didn’t want the children to associate the Word of God with a bitter pill; I’d rather have them associate the Bible with candy! I would often open one of the Bibles and see your names as donors written in the front of the Word of God given to the little children. MERCI BOU COUP!

I have before noted that as I was passing out these deworming pills to the little children I would feel as if I was giving them the Eucharist, I was passing out to them the broken body of the Lord Jesus Christ, just like communion. Into this harsh land filled with hurting and broken people, looking into the faces of little children, looking into their eyes, I would see the Lord Jesus Christ staring back at me. The glory of God in the face of Christ, staring back at me through the eyes of these little children. “By HIS stripes, by the wounds of Jesus, we are healed”. I would often be quite affected by this and moved to tears. I would get into a “zone” and everything else would fade away, the noise and commotion of all the people around me. And all I could see were the faces of these little children. All I could see were the eyes of Christ staring back at me. All I could hear were their little voices and the voice of the Good Shepherd. The world would fade away as I saw my Savior in their little lives...

And as I would give them the deworming pills they would say “Merci”, thank you. And after a while I would think to myself, “NO, you should not be saying “merci” to me, I should be saying “merci” to you. It is I who am being blessed in this moment as well. So I started to say “merci” to the little children and they would then say “merci” back to me. They were a little quizzical at first. But then they would start to look into my eyes and see Someone there, just as I saw Someone there when I looked into their eyes. I would say “merci”. And they would say “merci”. And I would receive mercy. And they would receive mercy. And the Lord Jesus Christ was there in all His love and power pouring out Merci AND Merci.

It is the spiritual transaction that is God in Christ entering into the world. It is the same spiritual transaction held in the sacrament of communion. “Merci” begets “Merci”. “Thank you, Lord” begets more reasons to say “Thank you, Lord”. We receive mercy from HIM and we are able to give mercy with our lives. Merci-Merci. Mercy-Mercy. It is why God sent Jesus into the world in the first place. Not that we understood or were somehow worthy of this great gift; not that we had earned this mercy; not that we deserved this grace. No. We just received this mercy. While we were yet sinners Christ died on a cross for our sins. Merci-Merci (here is the great spiritual transaction poured out through the life, death and resurrection of Christ).

It is why Jesus, in His great teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, referred to as The Beatitudes, says, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy...”* (Matthew 5: 7) Merci-Merci (here is that spiritual transaction once again). That’s what Jesus is saying.

So for what difficult person in your life do need you to ask God to give them MERCY? Mercy begets Mercy. Mercy invokes the Living Presence of Jesus Christ, HE who IS our mercy. Be merciful and receive mercy. Live a life out of mercy and we demonstrate we really are the recipients of the mercy of God through the cross of Jesus. NO MERCY—NO MERCY. Merci-Merci.

During communion, have you ever looked deeply into the eyes of someone who is receiving the sacrament? I have. And I will say that you always see SOMEONE ELSE staring back at you through their eyes. Take a look into the eyes of your brother or your sister here in church. Take a deep look into the eyes of a hurting, broken world. Take a deep look into the eyes of someone you dislike, who has hurt or wronged you...and PRAY “MERCY”. Merci-Merci.

In this sacrament we can receive mercy...and then we can also GIVE mercy...and then we can also LIVE MERCY. Blessed are the merciful, says Jesus, for they shall receive mercy...Merci-Merci. Amen and Amen.

**By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**