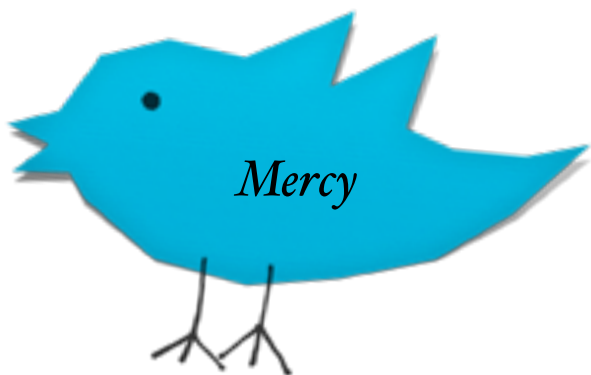




build. plant. grow.
the word this week



lent



lectionary
reading

Cycle B

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Lectionary #32

Reading I: 2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23

Today's first reading clearly indicates the patience and **mercy** that the Lord wishes to extend to the people. Eventually, the leadership, priests, and people have entered into a downward spiral. In the midst of this, the Babylonians arrive and capture the southern kingdom of Judah, ransack Jerusalem and the Temple, and send the Israelites to Babylon in exile. The concluding segments of the reading speak to the rise of the Persian Empire, its defeat of the Babylonians, and the release of the Israelites. The Lord has chosen Cyrus, the king of Persia, to restore Israel and the Temple, thus indicating that Cyrus was to be part of God's plan for salvation, revealing the depth of God's **mercy** and forgiveness.

Reading 2: Ephesians 2: 4-10

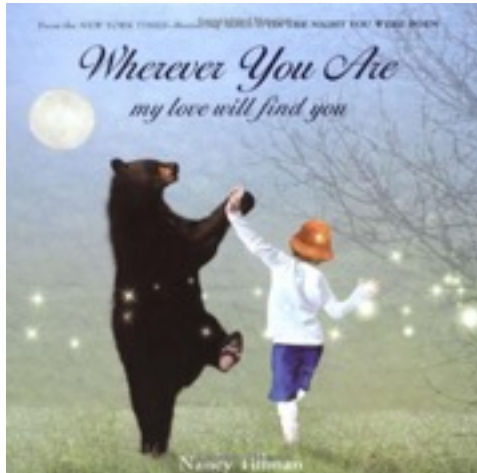
Saint Paul speaks eloquently of the love and **mercy** of God in his letter to the Ephesians. As Saint Paul states, in the midst of being *dead in our transgressions*, God brought us to life in Christ. This **mercy**, love, and forgiveness that comes from Christ is a free gift from God that can never be earned by us or granted as a special favor to a select few. God's **mercies** indeed cover all of the world. This is a great hope for all people throughout all ages!

Gospel: John 3: 14-21

As today's Gospel reading opens, Jesus is in conversation with Nicodemus. They are recalling an event of ancient Israel that Nicodemus, being schooled in the scriptures, would be familiar with. Jesus recalled how Moses had *lifted up the serpent in the desert* in order to bestow **mercy** upon the Israelites even though they were constantly complaining about God and their situation. Jesus will similarly *be lifted up* as the ultimate expression of God's **mercy** and forgiveness as stated in this passage, most especially John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave us his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.*



children's
story



Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You

Written by Nancy Tillman

Illustrated by Nancy Tillman

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character
education
activity

**Mercy is defined as
compassionate treatment,
especially of those under one's
power.**

Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You

Nancy Tillman takes the reader on a journey that describes the places and events one might find themselves in and shows that no matter where they are or what has happened, love will find a way to find you. Just one short excerpt from the text will give you an understanding of just how this story expresses the fact that God's love and **mercy** are always on a relentless search for each person:

*And if someday you're lonely,
or someday you're sad
or you strike out at baseball
or think you've been bad...
just lift up your face, feel the wind in your hair
That's me, my sweet baby, my love is right there.*

Activity: Mercy Card Activity with Board Games

Step One: Provide groups of students with age appropriate board games and have them play the game according to the traditional rules of the game, with one provision: each student is given a **Mercy Card** (these can easily be made by printing the word MERCY on a 3x5 index card). Each person must play their **Mercy Card** in order to be the winner of the game.

Step Two: How to Play the Mercy Card

When a player makes a bad move or loses an important round, another player may give him/her their **Mercy Card**. Upon receiving the **Mercy Card**, the player's bad move is wiped out.

For example: If the game is Monopoly, a player may land on an owned property with hotels and has to pay thousands of dollars in rent. The owner of that property could give their **Mercy Card** to the person who had just landed on that property, and the rent owed would be erased.

Step Three: Discuss the following questions as a class:

1. How did it feel to receive the **Mercy Card**?
2. How did it feel to give the **Mercy Card**?
3. Why would someone want to give **mercy**?
4. Why would someone not want to give **mercy**?

Mercy is being kind to someone when you may have the opportunity to be less than kind to them.



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

Think about all the people that you interact with each day and all of the good things that are part of your life, like a comfortable and safe home, food, and the opportunity to go to school and learn. Continue making a list of things that you have been given. Are there people who you encounter each day that you might be able to share your goodness with, most especially people that cannot repay you or do anything for you in return? Think about how you might help another person who does not have it as good as you do. Make a commitment to use your gifts, talents, and possessions to help another in need, again, not someone who could necessarily return the kindness.

Look Feel Know Act

Throughout history and in the present world, there have always been people who have had power over other people. The power of individuals can be used for good or for evil, and unfortunately we have seen how evil use of power has injured individuals and communities. We have also seen how the use of power for good has given others a helping hand when they were down. God always uses His power for the good of individuals, and that is why we refer to God as *all merciful*. Because we are made in the image and likeness of God, we know that this is how we are to use any power we might have in life. Each person has a choice: to be part of the problem or part of the solution. When we act in **merciful** ways, we are bringing God's light to the people around us and most especially to those who are in need. Commit yourself to being that image of God that will strive to express **mercy**, love, and compassion in the world around you and pray that by modeling that behavior, others may come to be conduits of that **mercy**.

In *Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You*, we see and hear how the love of a parent seeks us out, no matter where we have gone or what we have done. This love, expressed as **mercy** when we have done something wrong, continues to seek us out to correct us in love and kindness. There is a story in Saint Luke's Gospel about the **merciful** love of a parent who always seeks the return of a lost son; this story is known as The Return of the Prodigal Son. God is that loving parent who seeks us out in love, and that love is referred to as **mercy** most especially when we have wandered away from God and God's ways; that love is always calling us back...always!



**closing
tool**

Pray that you will always be a person of compassion and love and that you will always reflect God's loving mercy in your thoughts, words, and actions. Amen.



**Santa Clara
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