

**Bible reading Matthew 9:9-13,18-26**

**Love in action**

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE THE MEANING OF MERCIFUL LIVING.

Jesus wanted mercy, not sacrifice. But what exactly is that? How should we use the power that we have to show God's love, compassion and forgiveness to those around us?



**Bible notes**

Jesus is busy in the mission God has given him; there is no time to waste. That is why he quotes Hosea 6.6 to the religious leaders. It is not a time to sit around debating theology; it is a time to show God's mercy to people of all kinds.

So, Jesus invites a tax collector into his ramshackle band of travelling companions and then goes to dinner with all of Matthew's mates, people the Pharisees would not have crossed the street to kick. He does this because, like a physician, he needs to be spending his time with the sick, hence the Hosea quote. Then as if to prove it, a father whose daughter has just died turns up and asks for help. Jesus doesn't hesitate and they set off to the man's house. On the way, an unnamed woman interrupts his journey by touching his cloak. She receives healing and a word of love and encouragement from Jesus. He calls her 'daughter'. Then they are at the leader's house where the mourning rituals have begun. They laugh at Jesus when he says the girl is sleeping. What Jesus is suggesting seems so absurd that laughing is the only response. But the girl is raised, and Matthew says news of this spread around the whole district. You bet it did! Jesus had interrupted death with life, and Matthew intends us to see this as an example of what the Gospel does in people's lives: God has come to have mercy, and the story invites us to be people caught up in this, who live merciful lives in the wake of our Lord.



Make a 'mercy-ometer'. Draw the outline of a thermometer (like those you sometimes see where someone is fundraising) on a piece of paper and mark off intervals; eight to ten should be enough. Write words, or draw little pictures, that illustrate what 'showing mercy' means – e.g. kindness, caring. During the week, colour in a section each time you see mercy, or show it yourself. Add extra words as they occur to you. Is the mercy-ometer full by the end of the week?

**First impressions**

- How is the joey (baby) protected by the koala mother?
- The Hebrew word for mercy – racham – implies protection, like a mother's womb. So, what does merciful living mean?
- How might you show God's love mercifully this week?



**Pray** 

**You will need:** small pebbles, a marker pen, a bowl of water. This works best if you can do it with others – friends or members of your household, perhaps. Think about the people you will meet during the week to come, especially in any situations where you have some power or influence or the ability to do things that affect others. Mark a pebble with a cross for each person you want to show mercy to, and place it in the water as a prayer and a promise.

**A prayer to action**

God of mercy and justice,  
as we walk alongside those in our communities  
who seek mercy, kindness, or forgiveness,  
open our eyes to see them  
and our minds and hearts to reach out to them,  
that we may be moved to share your love and compassion  
in practical ways – and in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

**CREATE**

**You will need:** a large white sticky label (as large as you can find). The label represents the 'slate wiped clean' by the mercy and forgiveness we receive from Jesus. Go outside and gather things from nature – leaves, daisies, seeds, etc. Remove the backing from the label and use the items to create a beautiful new picture as a symbol of being washed clean and starting afresh.

 **LISTEN**



Listen to 'Love is action', by Tauren Wells on *Hills and Valleys*.  
<https://youtu.be/OCnsiP8atW0>  
Listen carefully to the words (or look them up). The first line of the chorus is 'Love is the action that you take' – what does this mean to you? What action will you take this week?