A painting depicting Jesus kneeling on the ground, holding a young child in his arms. Jesus is looking down at the child with a gentle expression. The child is wearing a dark, patterned garment. To the left, a candle in a holder provides a warm, golden light. The background is dark and textured, suggesting an outdoor or rustic setting. The overall mood is tender and compassionate.

“The Son of Man has come to seek
and to save what was lost.”

Luke 19:10

Mercy

One Church, Encountering Jesus,
Equipping Disciples, and **Living Mercy**

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Objectives

1. Draw hearts to a greater participation in the Mercy of God.

The theme for each week centers around Jesus' mission to reveal the merciful heart of his Father.

2. Facilitate an encounter with God through Scripture.

This series does not primarily provide an *education* in faith, but *life transformation* through an encounter with the living God.

3. Engage hearts through an experience of beauty.

The Psalm and painting for each week help engage the emotions and arouse the imagination as aids to prayer.

4. Form authentic friendships.

Make time for casual conversation and the sharing of life together outside of the weekly meetings.

5. Send out witnesses to share the Good News.

As Pope Francis said in *The Joy of the Gospel*, "anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love." We expect that many who complete the series as a participant will go on to lead their own group with encouragement and minimal coaching.

Who do I invite?

Those most likely to benefit from the *Mercy Bible* study are those who:

- Already have a personal relationship with Jesus
- Desire to follow Jesus more faithfully
- Are seeking a deeper experience of God's mercy in their life and relationships

Note: These characteristics refer to internal dispositions and attitudes that are best discovered through personal conversations where individuals feel heard and respected.

Disclaimers

1. *This is not group counseling.* If someone is experiencing strong emotion (particularly if it is a negative emotion), some in the group may be tempted to step in to comfort in a way that could be distracting for the rest of the group. Do your best to redirect the conversation and allow Jesus to finish what he has started in their heart.
2. *This is more that intellectual discussion.* We are not primarily seeking intellectual understanding, but prayer – a heart to heart conversation with God. As such, historical background, language, and other intellectual insights are best left to another time.

Suggested Meeting Outline

20 Minutes	Casual Conversation	Provide your group members an opportunity to build relationships – it will allow them to be more honest in later group discussions.
10 Minutes	Psalm & Conversation Starters	Read the Psalm aloud and check in on last week's group action.
45 Minutes	WRAP with the Gospel	Ask for a volunteer to read the Gospel passage aloud; then follow the process for WRAP as outlined in the guide.
10 Minutes	Going Deeper	Read the Scripture verses and ask the "going deeper questions" to guide your group's discussion.
5 Minutes	Group Action & Psalm	Introduce the group action and encourage your group to take the challenge. Then read the Psalm aloud as a closing prayer.
Total Time: 90 Minutes	End on Time	Everyone is free to leave at this point, but the leader should be prepared to stick around for anyone would like to continue the discussion.

1. Pray to the Holy Spirit for open hearts and the gift of prayer. Draw your group members' attention to any particular graces they are seeking in this time.
2. **WRITE**
 - a. **Read the Passage Aloud.** It is best to have a consistent reader, as some people get distracted as reading styles change.
 - b. Guide your group members to notice where the Lord draws their attention and **write** it down. This could be a word, phrase, or image. Give them permission to re-read the passage silently.
 - c. Invite anyone in your group who feels comfortable to share what the Lord is bringing to their attention. Acknowledge their contributions with a simple smile while encouraging silence rather than conversation at this point.
3. **REFLECT**
 - a. Read it aloud again
 - b. Invite your group members to deeper reflection on the scripture passage, saying something like, "Let the Lord draw your mind back to what initially grabbed your attention and use your imagination and intellect to **reflect** on what is going on in the passage."
 - c. Allow your group members time to write, then invite them to share as they feel comfortable.
4. **APPLY**
 - a. Read the passage aloud a final time.
 - b. Invite your group members to see the personal application of the Gospel passage, saying something like, "This time make it personal as you **apply** the passage to yourself. Where are you in the story?"
 - c. Allow time for writing, then invite people to share.
5. **PRAY**
 - a. Allow time for each member of your group to write a personal **prayer** in response to God.
 - b. Close with an Our Father.

The WRAP Method

*WRAP is an acronym and method for Lectio Divina from the book WRAP Yourself In Scripture © by Karen & Lawrence Dwyer published by The Institute for Priestly Formation (2011, 2018). The WRAP Method involves four steps: Write, Reflect, Apply, and Pray with Scripture.

KEYS FOR SUCCESS

1. Complete the *Small Group Action Plan* (on the next pages).

The Bible Study Action Plan will guide you through all of the logistical considerations of beginning a Bible Study.

2. Pray for your group members daily.

God is the one who changes hearts. Ask him every day to supply the grace needed for deep and lasting conversion of hearts.

3. Read the participant guide ahead of time.

Pray through the Gospel passage for the upcoming week ahead of time, and think through how you might answer the discussion questions.

4. Meet Weekly.

We recommend your group meet weekly through the initial study for consistency and maximum impact. However, if your group continues to meet, you might consider adjusting your meeting frequency to bi-weekly.

5. Meet Seasonally.

Some seasons of life are busier than others. It is a good idea to take periodic breaks, asking for commitments of around 5-8 weeks at a time.

6. Facilitate discussion instead of teaching.

Setting yourself up as the "teacher" can discourage participation from group members who are unsure of what they believe or who already feel like they don't belong. Trust that Jesus is revealing himself to them through their prayer with the scriptures, in just the way they need.

7. Build relationships with your group members.

Disciples are made in the context of authentic friendships. So, your effectiveness as a group leader and disciple-maker requires that you maximize the amount of time you spend together with your group outside the formal group time.

8. Cast vision for multiplying groups.

As you near the end of the series, begin encouraging your group members to look beyond your group to other people in their lives who might be ready to hear the Good News of Jesus. It is important to avoid an insular mentality - sharing the love of Jesus should be a natural overflow of our own encounter.



Small Group Action Plan

Questions for Reflection

Stepping Out in Faith

“Jesus said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’” What “loaves” do you have that the Lord can bless and multiply? (e.g., hospitality, listening ears, gift of gab, etc.).

List any fears about leading a small group that might be holding you back (e.g., lack of knowledge, fear of making invitations, disqualifying past, etc).

Help from the Lord

Who might help you co-lead as your “wingman” if you asked them?

Who will you ask to keep you accountable to this Action Plan, through both encouragement and practical coaching?

Logistics

Choose Day of the Week:

Sun

Mon

Tues

Wed

Thurs

Fri

Sat

Choose Location:

My home

Conference room at work

Someone else's home

Zoom

Coffee shop

Park

Other location: _____

Choose Time:

Before work

Over lunch

After weekend Mass

In the evening

After parish/school event

Other time

Target Start Date: ___ / ___ / ___

Make Invitations By: ___ / ___ / ___

Childcare Options:

No childcare

Grandparents

Split cost of a sitter

Other: _____

Possible Roles to Delegate to Other Members of the Group:

Provide drinks

Icebreaker

Provide snacks

Opening prayer

Other: _____

Set Time:

Start: ___:___ am/pm

End: ___:___ am/pm

Identifying your Mission Field

List the different affinity groups in which you consider yourself an “insider” (e.g., school parents, soccer moms, co-workers, neighborhood friends, etc). Consider others who belong to these groups as potential small group participants.

Use the table on the next page to plan your invitations:

1. Begin listing the names of people you could invite to your small group (6-10 attendees is ideal)
2. Ask the Lord why he wants that person to come, and write that down (use this reason when you make your invitation)
3. Think about when you will see the person and have an opportunity for a face-to-face conversation (if at all possible) – when and how will you strike up a conversation?
4. Pray for these people by name, both now and throughout your small groups

Name	How to Invite
------	---------------

Ex. Bob Smith

Why: *He is new to town and I think the Lord wants him to have true friends here*
Method: *Ask him when we get coffee together in the break room at work*

	Why: Method:
--	-----------------

Why:
Method:

	Why: Method:
--	-----------------

Why:
Method:

	Why: Method:
--	-----------------

Why:
Method:

	Why: Method:
--	-----------------



Mercy Study



Week One:
Love of Enemies

WRAP with the Gospel - Luke 6:27-36

But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as also your Father is merciful.

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Two: **To Seek and To Save**

Psalm 145:14-19

The LORD supports all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look hopefully to you;
you give them their food in due season.
You open wide your hand
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

The LORD is just in all his ways,
merciful in all his works.
The LORD is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

Conversation Starter

1. What do you think it means for God to be merciful?
2. Have you ever had a concrete experience of God's mercy in Confession? What was that like?



Zacchaeus in the Tree, (Greek Orthodox Icon)

Week Two:
To Seek and To Save

WRAP with the Gospel - Luke 19:1-10

He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Two:
To Seek and To Save

Going Deeper Questions

1. What can we learn from this passage about forgiveness, reconciliation, and restitution for sin?

2. Jesus says that his mission is “to seek and to save what was lost”. What does this mean to you?

Group Action

Commit individually to receiving the sacrament of reconciliation in the next week. As a group, identify confession times in your parish or a neighboring parish. You can use the examination of conscience included as an appendix to prepare.

Psalm 145:14-19

The LORD supports all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look hopefully to you;
you give them their food in due season.
You open wide your hand
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

The LORD is just in all his ways,
merciful in all his works.
The LORD is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

Week Three: **The Prodigal Son**

Psalm 103:1, 11-13, 18

Bless the LORD, my soul;
 all my being, bless his holy name!
 For as the heavens tower over the earth,
 so his mercy towers over those who fear him.
 As far as the east is from the west,
 so far has he removed our sins from us.

As a father has compassion on his children,
 so the LORD has compassion
 on those who fear him.
 of those who keep his covenant,
 and remember to carry out his precepts.

Conversation Starter

1. Have you ever hidden from God's mercy or been jealous of the mercy he has given to others?
2. Is there a particular area of your life, a memory, a habit, a relationship, etc. that you want to bring before the Lord's mercy?



Return of the Prodigal Son, c.1661-1669 (Rembrandt)

Week Three:
The Prodigal Son

WRAP with the Gospel - Luke 15:11-24

Then he said, “A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.”’ So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But his father ordered his servants, ‘Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’ Then the celebration began.

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Four:
Pardon of the Sinful Woman

Psalm 33:18-22

Behold, the eye of the LORD
is upon those who fear him,
upon those who count on his mercy,
To deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive through famine.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
he is our help and shield.
For in him our hearts rejoice;
in his holy name we trust.
May your mercy, LORD, be upon us;
as we put our hope in you.

Conversation Starter

1. What is one thing you are most grateful for this past week?
2. How have you noticed God's presence in the past week?



Forgiven, c. 1965 (Daniel Gerhartz)

Week Four:
Pardon of the Sinful Woman

WRAP with the Gospel - Luke 7:36-50

A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Five:
The Rich Man and Lazarus

Psalm 145:1-7

I will extol you, my God and king;
I will bless your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless you;
I will praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD and worthy of much praise,
whose grandeur is beyond understanding.
One generation praises your deeds to the next
and proclaims your mighty works.

They speak of the splendor of your majestic glory,
tell of your wonderful deeds.
They speak of the power of your awesome acts
and recount your great deeds.
They celebrate your abounding goodness
and joyfully sing of your justice.

Conversation Starter

1. Who in your life do you wish you treated with greater mercy?
2. What is currently preventing you from doing this?



The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus, c. 1625 (Hendrick ter Brugghen)

Week Five:
The Rich Man and Lazarus

WRAP with the Gospel - Luke 16:19-31

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.’ Abraham replied, ‘My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.’ He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ Then Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Five:
The Rich Man and Lazarus

Going Deeper Questions

1. In your experience, what makes showing mercy easy, joyful, and peaceful?

2. In your experience, what makes showing mercy easy, joyful, and peaceful?

Group Action

Schedule a one-on-one meeting with your group leader to pray WRAP together and talk about what you are taking away from this small group study so far.

Psalm 145:1-7

I will extol you, my God and king;
 I will bless your name forever and ever.
 Every day I will bless you;
 I will praise your name forever and ever.
 Great is the LORD and worthy of much praise,
 whose grandeur is beyond understanding.
 One generation praises your deeds to the next
 and proclaims your mighty works.

They speak of the splendor of your majestic glory,
 tell of your wonderful deeds.
 They speak of the power of your awesome acts
 and recount your great deeds.
 They celebrate your abounding goodness
 and joyfully sing of your justice.

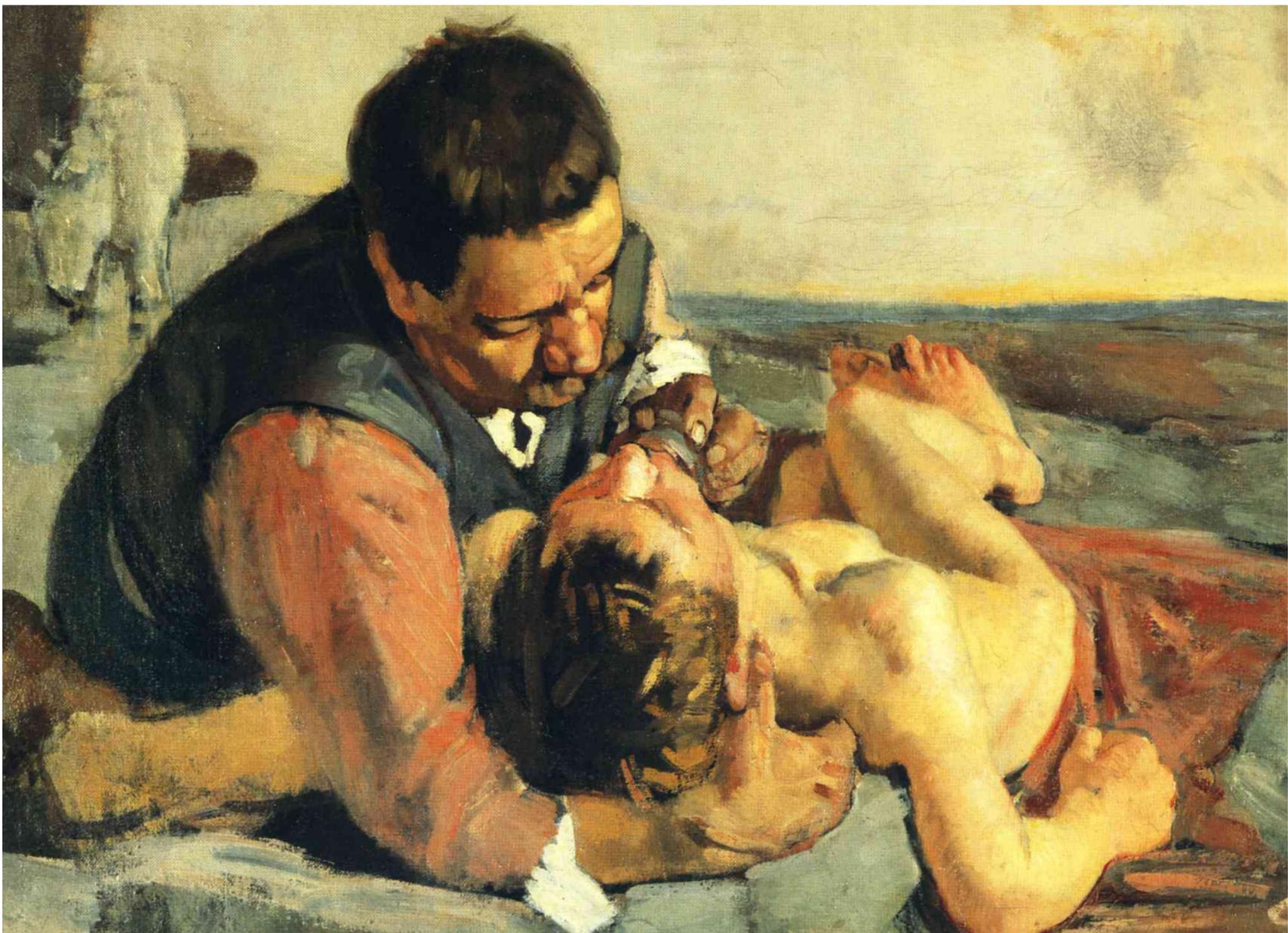
Week Six:
The Good Samaritan

Psalm 112:4-9

<p>Light shines through the darkness for the upright; gracious, compassionate, and righteous. It is good for the man gracious in lending, who conducts his affairs with justice. For he shall never be shaken; the righteous shall be remembered forever. He shall not fear an ill report;</p>	<p>his heart is steadfast, trusting the LORD. His heart is tranquil, without fear, till at last he looks down on his foes. Lavishly he gives to the poor; his righteousness shall endure forever; his horn shall be exalted in honor.</p>
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Conversation Starter

1. How would you summarize your conversations about mercy up to this point in the lectio series?
2. What questions do you still have that you want to bring to the Lord and to this group?



The Good Samaritan, c. 1885 (Ferdinand Hodler)

Week Six:
The Good Samaritan

WRAP with the Gospel - Luke 10:25-37

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” The Parable of the Good Samaritan. But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Six:
The Good Samaritan

Going Deeper Questions

1. What does it mean to be a good neighbor according to the Gospel?

2. What do you think enable the good Samaritan to respond so readily and with such generosity when he encountered suffering?

Group Action

This week, tell someone (a friend, family member, co-worker, etc) about how you have encountered Jesus and the difference that encounter has made in your life.

Psalm 112:4-9

<p>Light shines through the darkness for the upright; gracious, compassionate, and righteous. It is good for the man gracious in lending, who conducts his affairs with justice. For he shall never be shaken; the righteous shall be remembered forever. He shall not fear an ill report;</p>	<p>his heart is steadfast, trusting the LORD. His heart is tranquil, without fear, till at last he looks down on his foes. Lavishly he gives to the poor; his righteousness shall endure forever; his horn shall be exalted in honor.</p>
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Archdiocese *of* Omaha