



REFLECTION ON THEME OF

MERCY

And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?
-Micah 6:8 (KJV)

Mercy is radical kindness. Mercy means offering or being offered aid in desperate straits. Mercy is not deserved. It involves absolving the unabsolvable, forgiving the unforgiveable. Mercy brings us to the miracle of apology, given and accepted, to unashamed humility when we have erred or forgotten.

Anne Lamott, *Hallelujah Anyway*

"[Job] lay wracked with pain and in moral despair; ... and when he felt even worse, he got an answer from God saying, Who on earth do you think you are? Question me? Let me give you a hint of who I am and what I know. But a peek into Divine knowledge was less important than gaining, at last, the Lord's attention. Which...was all Job ever wanted. Not proof of His existence-- he never questioned that. Nor proof of His power-- everyone accepted that. He simply wanted to catch His eye. To be recognized not as worthy or worthless, but to be noticed as a life-form by the One who made and unmade it."

-Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*

Mercy, Mercy, Me

1971 By Marvin Gaye, Adapted

Mercy mercy me
Things ain't what they used to be, no no
Where did all the blue skies go?
Poison is the wind that blows from the north and south and east

Mercy, mercy me,
Things ain't what they used to be, no no
Oil wasted on the oceans and upon our seas, fish full of mercury

Mercy, mercy me
Things ain't what they used to be, no no
Radiation under ground and in the sky
Animals and birds who live nearby are dying

Mercy, mercy me
Things ain't what they used to be
What about this overcrowded land
How much more abuse from man can she stand?

Oh, no no,
My Lord, my sweet Lord

Even with all our technology and the invention that make modern life so much easier than it once was, it takes just one big natural disaster to wipe all that away and remind us that, here on earth, we're still at the mercy of nature.

-Neil deGrasse Tyson

A man gazing on the stars is proverbially at the mercy of the puddles in the road.

-Alexander Smith

May we not succumb to thoughts of violence and revenge today, but rather to thoughts of mercy and compassion. We are to love our enemies that they might be returned to their right mind.

-Marianne Williamson

Think carefully before asking for justice. Mercy might be safer.

-Mason Cooley

Heaven have mercy on us all—Presbyterians and Pagans alike—for we are all sore dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending.

-Herman Melville

As the sun's rays will irradiate even the murky pool, and make its stagnant waters to shine like silver, so doth God's goodness and tender mercy, towards the greatest sinner...make his own image visible there!

-Hosea Ballou

The 23rd Psalm
by Bobby McFerrin

The Lord is my shepherd, I have all I need,
She makes me lie down in green meadows.
Beside the still waters, She will lead.
She restores my soul, She rights my wrongs,
She leads me in the path of good things,
She fills my heart with songs.

Even though I walk through a dark and dreary land
There is nothing that can shake me,
She has said she won't forsake me, I'm in her hand.
She sets a table before me in the presence of my foes,
She anoints my head with oil and my cup overflows.

Surely, surely goodness and kindness will follow me
All the days of my life,
And I will live in Her house forever, forever and ever.
Glory be to the Mother and Daughters and
To the Holy of Holies,
As it was in the beginning, is now
And ever shall be,
World without end, Amen.

They expect a certain amount of leniency or mercy from me because I'm a woman, and if you've ever met my mother, you should know that not even in the cards. She's much tougher than I am – she's a retired schoolteacher, so she's seen it all.

-Loretta Lynch

"But then Job was a man. Invisibility was intolerable to men. What complaint would a female Job dare to put forth? And if, having done so, and He deigned to remind her of how weak and ignorant she was, where was the news in that? What shocked Job into humility and renewed fidelity was the message a female Job would have known and heard every minute of her life."

-Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*

I'm not sure I even recognize the ever-presence of mercy anymore, the divine and the human: the messy, rippled, transforming, heartbreaking, lovely, devastating presence of mercy. But I have come to believe that I am starving to death for it, and my world is, too.

Anne Lamott, *Hallelujah Anyway*

"The Mercy" by Phillip Levine

The ship that took my mother to Ellis Island
Eighty-three years ago was named "The Mercy."
She remembers trying to eat a banana
Without first peeling it and seeing her first orange
In the hands of a young Scot, a seaman
Who gave her a bite and wiped her mouth for her
With a red bandana and taught her the word,
'orange,' saying it patiently over and over.

A long autumn voyage, the days darkening
With the black waters calming as night came on,
Then nothing as far as her eyes could see and space
Without limit rushing off to the corners
Of creation. She prayed in Russian and Yiddish
To find her family in New York, prayers
Unheard or misunderstood or perhaps ignored
By all the powers that swept the waves of darkness
Before she woke, that kept "The Mercy" afloat
While smallpox raged among the passengers
And crew until the dead were buried at sea
With strange prayers in a tongue she could not fathom.

"The Mercy," I read on the yellowing pages of a book
I located in a windowless room of the library
On 42nd Street, sat thirty-one days
Off-shore in quarantine before the passengers
Disembarked. There a story ends. Other ships
Arrived, "Tancred" out of Glasgow, "The Neptune"
Registered as Danish, "Umberta IV,"
The list goes on for pages, November gives
Way to winter, the sea pounds the alien shore.

Italian miners from Piemonte dig
Under towns in western Pennsylvania
Only to rediscover the same nightmare
They left at home. A nine-year-old girl travels
All night by train with one suitcase and an orange.
She learns that mercy is something you can eat
Again and again while the juice spills over
Your chin, you can wipe it away with the back
Of your hands and you can never get enough.