



PARKSIDE CHAPEL

LIFE NEWS

The weekly newsletter article
of Parkside Chapel

THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

by Nigel Unrau, Lead Pastor



It happened for the first time since moving to Visalia more than six years ago. I was running through Walmart early on a Saturday morning, which is a first, but that's not what I'm talking about. I was grabbing a few things from the fresh food section when a lady walked up and started talking to me. I had my earbuds in, so at first, I didn't understand what she was saying.

She, I'll call her Mary, had a very concerned look on her face, so I could tell she wasn't just making small talk.

I took out my earbuds and asked her to repeat herself. She asked, "Do you know Jesus?"

I've had some weird Jesus conversations in the grocery store in the past, but this was different.

This person, a total stranger, was courageous enough to walk up to a guy in a public place and get straight to the point. Maybe Mary looked at me in my sorry state (Saturday mornings aren't my favorite) and figured me for a hungover heathen.

Surprised, I said, "Yes." But before I could elaborate, she persisted. Mary wanted to know if I had asked for forgiveness of my sins and put my faith in Jesus as my Savior; this was serious business. I assured her that I had and that I was a pastor here in town. Her countenance immediately softened, and a smile spread across her face. Then she added something that surprised me yet again. Mary said, "So then you're not worried about anything that's going on in this crazy world, are you? You know that Jesus is in control and that He's coming back." She was visibly relieved; Mary was genuinely worried for me and my eternal soul.

We moved on, grateful to have met each other and encouraged to have had a "family" encounter in the produce aisle, bonding over our common faith. But what stands out is the risk that Mary was willing to take, to offer herself as someone that Jesus could use to show His mercy to someone else. She was motivated by sin and the effects of sin in our world to reach out to me and give me Jesus. Mary embodied the words of Jude.

¹⁷ But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸ that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." ¹⁹ These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on some, who are doubting; ²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

Mary saw the signs of the times described in the Bible, and she knew that the only solution to my sin problem was Jesus. She didn't know my spiritual condition, yet she was willing to engage with me to find out. Mary had a desire to see me through whatever doubt or fear I might have or whatever sin I might be caught up in so that I could share in the hope she has.

This is the ministry of Jesus, a ministry of mercy. We could turn our backs on an unbelieving and sinful world or engage that world knowing the mercy of Jesus is there to welcome them in. Jude reminds us that we are rescuing them from eternal fire by snatching them out of the judgment that awaits them. A posture of mercy is a posture of humility that comes from a heart of compassion. A heart that is moved to reach out to strengthen another person's faith in Jesus.

A heart that is moved by what the penalty for sin will be. That is the ministry of Jesus, that is the ministry of the church... the ministry of mercy.

To show mercy and share Christ.

Because of Jesus,

Nigel