Dear Open Door Family,

Awhile ago after working in the yard in the heat of the day, I was very hot, very sweaty, and very thirsty. So I turned the garden hose on just right - I let the water get cold and then started to drink. I was enjoying the water so much that I did not notice my friend sneak up to the faucet and turn it on full blast. At a moment like that no matter how hard you try you cannot take in all the water that is flowing. So eventually it sprays all over and soaks you. That is a little like what happened to the five of us who went to the Moody Bible Institutes Pastor's conference last week. There was so much to take in it was almost like trying to take a drink out of a fireman's hose. It was a good week and all of us came back refreshed and challenged. We returned with a lot to think about and a burning desire to see God continue to work in our lives.

As I was reading this week in Luke I read this passage where the tax-collector cries out for God's mercy. I love the fact that God's Mercy is never ending and always available. Like the water in the fire hose, it can soak us through and through and there will always be more. Let's look at these verses together.

Luke 18:13 (JBP) But the tax-collector stood in a distant corner, scarcely daring to look up to Heaven, and with a gesture of despair, said, 'God, have MERCY on a sinner like me.'

Psalms 51:1-4 (NIV) Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. [2] Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. [3] For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. [4] Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

In Luke Jesus told the story of a Pharisee who prayed about himself and how wonderful he was and then the tax collector. Wow, what an amazing prayer from someone who knew that they deserved God's judgment. Yet Jesus tells us (Lk. 18:14) that this man went home JUSTIFIED. Mercy is often defined as - Not getting what we deserve. But the word is a very rich word and there is more to it than just that. David (Ps. 51:1) calls out for God's mercy in connection with God's unfailing love and great compassion. There is also a close similarity in the confession of the tax-collector and David. There is a sense of their own sinfulness and a realization that without the mercy of God they would have NO HOPE. Both these prayers come from hearts that are Humble, Desperate (to be forgiven) and Dependent on God. In both prayers there is a grieving over their own sin.

PRAYER: Lord God, please help me to see my sin as You see it. Help me to humbly come to You, seeking Your Mercy. Lord Jesus, thank You that Your Mercy is free and always available. Help me to depend on Your Mercy - Your unfailing Love - and Your deep compassion. Lord, I cannot live as I should without Your work continuing in my life; please keep on working.

Pastor Mark Kieft