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The movie *O Brother Where Art Thou?* could be considered a reflection on mercy. It follows three escaped convicts in the south during the Great Depression who encounter all kinds of obstacles while attempting to evade capture as they pursue a fictional treasure. It's a fun comedic adventure where the three characters lie, steal, cheat, get baptized, make a record that becomes a best seller, aid a famous bank robber, get conned, beat up and have all their money stolen by a one-eyed Bible salesman, rescue a Black man from the KKK, prevent a white supremist from getting elected governor, and finally get caught by the corrupt sheriff who decides to murder them. Despite all that goes right and wrong for the characters, in the end, they experience mercy: A compassionate, restorative kindness given not because it was earned, but because it is what God desires and is a manifestation of God's kingdom here on earth. In the end, the three characters' lives are miraculously spared, they are pardoned for all their crimes and given a new opportunity to pass that same mercy on to others.

Mercy is at the heart of today's Gospel when Jesus challenged the pharisees to learn what it means what God desires is mercy. Then, similar to our Indigenous siblings style of teaching, Jesus taught mercy by showing it.

Jesus showed mercy to the leader of the Jewish synagogue who asked him to give life to his dead child. And to the woman who had a chronic illness that not only caused physical suffering, it also most likely ostracized her from the community because it involved bleeding. We could also say Jesus showed mercy to Matthew the tax collector by calling him to join his band of disciples. In Jesus' day and time tax collectors were labeled traitors who betrayed their people by working for the Roman government taking not only tax money from their people, but additional money as their salary. Many a tax collector was said to take more than they needed to live, making them selfish, greedy and not caring about the people they lived off of. Inviting someone like that into Jesus' ministry is a mercy much like the convicts in *O Brother Where Art Thou?* in that Jesus gave both liberation from one life and new life with him. A life we have no reason to believe Matthew earned or even imagined for himself before Jesus came along.

As for the religious leader who asked Jesus to restore his child, did you notice Jesus did not condemn him for any sins he may have committed? Neither did he say this man deserved more help because of his station in life. Jesus simply went with him, no questions asked. Unlike the religious leader, the woman suffering from hemorrhaging did not ask Jesus for help. Perhaps after many years of being outside of society and possibly her family, she had gotten used to taking care of herself. Perhaps she didn't want to pass her unclean status onto Jesus by talking to him and believed she could get around that by touching the fringe of his garment in a situation where no one might notice. But Jesus noticed. He noticed her. He saw what others did not, a person who despite all she suffered still had faith, still had not given up. Maybe she had that in common with the religious leader.

In healing the woman whose name we will never know, Jesus not only restored her body to wellness, he restored her to her community and family. Much like Matthew, Jesus showed her mercy by liberating her from one life so that she might live anew.

Finally, Jesus restored the religious leader's daughter's life, so that both daughter and father might live anew.

When we consider Jesus' acts of mercy in today's Gospel, it might be tempting to consider them from Jesus' perspective and ask ourselves how we can be more like him. This is not wrong, there's lots of good sermons about that. Maybe you've heard or preached them. However, an Indigenous Bible Scholar suggests we might have a deeper experience of the Gospel if we consider the perspectives of the characters who received mercy. The scholar argues we all can learn what it means that God desires mercy

by continually praying for and receiving God's mercy ourselves, like Matthew, the religious leader, and the woman.

For example, perhaps there are times when we profit financially or in other ways from current or past systems or businesses whose practices are greedy, careless, or unjust. Perhaps there is something or someone we lost that we don't know how to grieve. Perhaps there are times we feel like outsiders in our own communities, unheard and unseen. Or perhaps we feel exhausted, spiritually, physically, mentally. Perhaps it is something different for you. The point is it is Jesus the embodiment of God's love on earth that bestows mercy in many forms, and those who receive it can learn to embody its liberating, healing, restorative love so that can be shared.

Perhaps that is why we pray *Lord, have mercy* when we are most in need or when we don't know what to do. It is3as one way we reach out to Jesus, asking him to show us once again what it means that of all the things God could want, what God wants most is to give mercy and for us to do the same.