

## WEEK 6 “Practicing Mercy” FOR HUMBLE ACCESS, Book of Common Prayer, p. 337

**OPENING INVITATION** *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*

*If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.*




**CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT** *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

This prayer is one that can be traced back to early Eastern liturgies that predate the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549. During medieval times when the priest became the sole actor and recipient of communion, this prayer is one that the priest would say prior to receiving communion. It was not so much a part of the official liturgy as it was the type of private prayer in manuals used by the clergy.

Consequently, this collect is an example of Thomas Cranmer’s determination and purpose to put the entire liturgy into the hands of the people in the language of the people. It is also an example of Cranmer’s creativity of incorporating phrases and concepts from many older sources to create a new prayer. Though its location has moved, this prayer has been included in every Book of Common Prayer since 1549. Over time it became a prayer not only said by the priest, but by the people.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

*After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:*

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

**SCRIPTURE** *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

**Mathew 8:5-13.** What is the significance of this story?

**Matthew 9:9-13.** “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” What would be the significance of these words to a first century Jew?

**Matthew 15:21-28.** Outline the differences between Jesus and this woman. What is the significance of this story?

Taken collectively, it seems that for Matthew, the idea of mercy is central to his understanding of Jesus' message and mission. Often considered the most "Jewish" of the Gospels, why might this concept of mercy be important to Matthew? Using these stories as a starting point, what is faith?

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION** *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. What is your own understanding of mercy?
2. What is the sacrifice that mercy requires of us?
3. Speak of a time that you experienced mercy in your life.
4. Speak of a time that the Holy Eucharist was particularly meaningful to you.

**CLOSING** *Pray the collect together as a group.*

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