



5 Day Devotional

This five-day devotional is an invitation to move beyond a Sunday encounter into the kind of life-changing connection Jesus often cultivated around a table. As you reflect each day, ask God to reshape your identity by His mercy and to form you into someone who both receives and gives encouragement in community.

Day 1

Matthew 9:9-13

Jesus' call to Matthew reminds us that discipleship often begins with a simple invitation—"Follow me"—and then quickly moves into relationships. Matthew doesn't just privately change his mind; he opens his home and puts Jesus at the center of his table. The religious crowd questions who belongs near God, but Jesus answers with mercy: He comes close to the sick, the shamed, and the labeled, not to confirm their old identity but to heal it.

The sermon highlighted that the "temple" can declare truth to many, but the "table" is where truth becomes personal. Around a table, Jesus' mercy refuses to partner with shame-based identity—either the crowd's opinion or our own harsh conclusions. When we let Jesus into our everyday spaces and let others witness His work in us, our story becomes more than information; it becomes transformation that invites others to hope.

Today consider the possibility that one of the most spiritual steps you can take isn't louder effort, but closer connection. Mercy may be inviting you out of isolation and into community where you can be known, challenged, and encouraged to live from God's opinion of you.

- Where do you most feel "labeled" by your past, your weakness, or other people's assumptions?
- What would it look like for you to "make room at the table" for Jesus in a practical way this week (time, habits, relationships)?
- Who is one person you could invite into a meaningful conversation rather than staying at a distance?
- When you think about God's view of you, what phrase or truth do you need to hold onto today?
- Take one step toward community: reach out to a small group leader, invite someone for coffee, or attend a gathering you've been avoiding.

Day 2

Luke 7:36-50

At Simon the Pharisee's table, a woman with a painful reputation enters the room and does something courageous: she brings her whole self—sorrow, love, and need—to Jesus. The room is full of judgment, but Jesus does not join it. He acknowledges the truth about her sin without allowing sin to become her identity, and He speaks forgiveness where others expected condemnation.

This is the kind of "table moment" the sermon described: a place safe enough to open what you've spent your life keeping shut. In a crowd, it can be easier to hide behind religious language or quiet shame. But across the table—face to face—Jesus' mercy disrupts the inner echo chamber that says, "This is all I'll ever be." Mercy is God's refusal to agree with any final conclusion about you that isn't rooted in His redeeming love.

Receiving mercy also reshapes how we treat others. If Jesus doesn't partner with shame, then neither should we. The table becomes a training ground for a new kind of community: people who tell the truth, but never weaponize it; people who confess, but aren't crushed; people who are forgiven, and therefore learn to love much.

- What have you been tempted to keep "shut" out of fear of being judged or rejected?
- How do you typically respond when you feel exposed—hide, perform, blame, or withdraw?
- What is the difference between conviction that leads you to Jesus and shame that drives you away from Him?
- Who in your life needs mercy from you that refuses to reduce them to their worst moment?
- Practice a courageous step today: confess something to God in prayer and, if appropriate, share with a trusted believer who can help you walk in freedom.

Day 3

James 2:13

The sermon's key phrase—"mercy triumphs over judgment"—is not sentimental; it's powerful. Judgment happens when we draw a final conclusion about ourselves or someone else, as if redemption is no longer possible. Mercy doesn't deny reality, but it refuses to let sin, failure, or suffering have the last word about identity and destiny.

This matters because many of our deepest struggles are not just about behavior, but about belonging and identity. When we accept an identity outside of God—"I'm unwanted," "I'm damaged," "I'm a failure," "I'll never change"—we're living under a verdict God didn't speak. Mercy is God's "no" to that false verdict, and His "yes" to the life He's forming in you through Jesus.

Around the table, believers can help each other resist self-judgment and stay anchored to God's view. In healthy community, someone can look you in the eye and say, "I know God, and I know you—and this isn't the end of your story." That kind of encouragement doesn't replace God's voice; it helps you hear it more clearly in the storm.

- What "final conclusion" about yourself have you been tempted to accept as unchangeable?
- Where do you confuse honest self-awareness with self-condemnation?
- What would it look like to let mercy have the final word in one specific area of your life (relationship, habit, calling, fear)?
- Who has spoken merciful truth into your life before, and how did it change you?
- Write a one-sentence declaration you can return to this week that aligns with God's mercy (e.g., "God is not finished with me, and His mercy is stronger than my shame.").

Day 4

Hebrews 10:23-25

Hebrews calls us to “hold fast” and to keep gathering because faith is not only a private conviction—it’s a shared endurance. The sermon used the picture of navigation in a storm: when winds and currents push from every direction, you need a fixed bearing and you need help staying on course. Big church can be like hearing the broadcast, but the table is often where someone helps you apply it to the exact waters you’re in.

This passage also says we should “provoke” one another to love and good works and “encourage” one another. That means community isn’t only comfort; it’s formation. Around the table, we learn to speak life, call out what God is doing, and refuse to let each other drift into isolation, despair, or distracted living. Encouragement is not flattery—it’s strengthening someone to stay faithful through the next hard day.

If you’ve been trying to endure with only willpower and inspiration, today is an invitation to practice a different strategy: connection. God often provides direction and stability through people who know you well enough to notice drift, ask good questions, and remind you of the hope you’ve confessed.

- Where do you feel like you’re in “storm conditions” right now—emotionally, relationally, spiritually, or practically?
- What does “holding fast” look like for you in one concrete decision you need to make this week?
- How has isolation affected your faith, your thought life, or your resilience?
- Who is one person you can ask to help you stay on course through prayer, check-ins, or honest conversation?
- Choose one next step toward community today: attend a small group, sign up, or schedule a recurring time with another believer for encouragement and prayer.

Day 5

Luke 19:5-10

Zacchaeus' story shows the difference between observing Jesus from a distance and being personally invited into relationship. He climbs a tree to see Jesus over the crowd, but Jesus calls him by name and brings him down—into conversation, presence, and change. God has never been interested in leaving us “in the trees,” stuck in hiddenness, curiosity, or self-protective distance.

At the table of Zacchaeus' home, mercy doesn't just forgive; it restores a person's future. Zacchaeus responds with tangible repentance and generosity, not to earn salvation, but because salvation has reached him. This is the fruit the sermon pointed toward: when mercy reshapes identity, our choices begin to shift—money, priorities, relationships, and integrity start aligning with the new life Jesus is forming.

Today's progression is a gentle challenge: move from the temple to the table, from listening to opening, from inspiration to transformation. Jesus still calls people down from the places they hide and into a community where grace becomes practical and growth becomes sustainable. The invitation isn't merely to attend something; it's to be known, to be healed, and to become an encourager who helps others come down too.

- Where are you currently “in a tree”—watching from a distance rather than stepping into honest relationship?
- What would it mean for you to respond quickly if Jesus is inviting you into deeper community or obedience?
- How has mercy changed your desires or priorities in the past, even in small ways?
- What is one tangible act of repentance or restoration you sense God prompting you toward (a conversation, an apology, a boundary, a step of generosity)?
- Make a simple plan for the next week: identify one “table moment” you will pursue (invite someone over, join a group, meet a mentor, or share your story with a trusted friend).