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For mercy's sake

by Joyce Rupp

But if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless.

?Matthew 12:7

Jesus and his disciples were walking through a field of grain. The Pharisees became upset when the hungry disciples pulled off and ate some of the heads of grain because such activity was not permitted on the Sabbath. Jesus responded to their criticism by telling the Pharisees that he was not so concerned about the rules of the law (sacrifice) as he was about the way people related to one another (mercy).

I know Jesus' words are true for me: I'd rather fast for a day anytime (sacrifice) than have to be kind and open to someone who has dealt me a low blow (mercy). I would rather choose my own daily sacrifices than have them come to me in the form of critical people, impatient drivers, grumbling friends and irritable coworkers. How much easier it is to give up a piece of candy or go to church on Sunday than to stay loving toward those who mess up my day. Sacrifices I choose seem easy compared to the continual kindness required by Jesus.

Merciful God,
I will accept the difficult people of my day.
May the sacrifices I choose be ones
filled with love and kindheartedness.

[This meditation is reprinted from Joyce Rupp's book *Inviting God In: Spiritual Reflections and Prayers Throughout the Year.*]

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