

May 17, 2020
The Sermon on the Mount (6)
What Does Mercy Look Like?
Matthew 5:6
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We are now halfway through the beatitudes. The first four beatitudes deal with the inner attitudes of the heart and mind. We are to be “poor in spirit” or humble. We are to “mourn” over the destruction and loss caused by sin in our life and in the lives of others. We are to be “meek.” Meek is a quality of strength under control, much like a tamed horse that obeys its master. We are to “hunger and thirst for righteousness.” Our drive and our need to survive is righteousness, acting right before Almighty God. These are to be our be-attitudes if we are to live a blessed or happy life. The blessedness comes from seeking, knowing, trusting in, and obeying the Lord. All of the attitudes are needed if a person is to accept Christ as Lord and follow Him.

This morning we are going to focus on Matthew 5:7 in which Jesus said, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”* This beatitude could be called the out flowing beatitude, for mercy must be shown. We cannot be merciful without someone knowing its effects. Mercy is an outward expression, a manifestation of an inner attitude. Rabbi Gamaliel quoted in the Talmud saying, “Whenever you have mercy, God will have mercy upon you, and if you have not mercy, neither will God have mercy on you.” The word “mercy” emphasizes the relief of misery with which grace covers. Webster’s Dictionary gives a very clear picture of mercy. Mercy is defined as compassion or forbearance shown to an offender or subject, a blessing that is an act of divine favor or compassion, relief of distress; and compassion shown to victims of misfortune. As we can determine from the definitions, mercy is an action word. It is an action that must be taken. Mercy cannot be rendered unless there is decisive action taken to give it. Some have described the practice of mercy or being Christ-like as a pond. There are outlets at both ends. God’s grace, forgiveness, mercy, and blessings flow in one end and we in turn are to allow those blessings to flow out to others. If we block one end, our life will grow stagnant, or worse, dry up.

The provider of mercy is God. He has the authority and right to give mercy. He is holy. He has been wronged by the sins of man and only He has the right to show us grace and mercy and forgive us those sins. We cannot pay for our own sin with good works when the penalty is death. We cannot possibly do enough good. From Genesis to Revelation, God has shown us His mercy. He showed His mercy by withholding His judgment. He showed His mercy with His chosen people by putting up with their grumbling and murmuring, and even when His judgment came, He kept a remnant of the faithful. God’s greatest act of mercy is His sending of His Son, and in so doing, allowed us the choice to be forgiven, rid of sin and death forevermore. The Lord has shown us mercy on the cross once and for all. He has forgiven our sins once and for all and in His mercy He has pardoned us completely and paid the account fully. We have no ability to redeem ourselves. We are hopeless and helpless against the power of sin. Scripture says we are objects of God’s wrath because of that sin. What hope is there? Titus 3:5 says, *“He (the Lord) saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”*

The mercy of God is manifest by Jesus on the cross. This great, grand act of mercy brings healing to a broken relationship between man and God. The mercy of the cross breaks the power of sin and death and instead gives us the opportunity of everlasting life. Ephesians chapter 2 says we go from being objects of wrath to objects of unconditional love.

Secondly, we experience forgiveness because of His mercy. The result of God’s mercy is forgiveness. Not only does God forgive, but He forgets. Micah 7:18 says, *“Who is God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgressions of the remnant of His inheritance? You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy.”* Mercy takes the form of action, action that is directed toward others. God’s mercy takes the form of

forgiveness. We have become objects of wrath because of our sin and the penalty is death. God however sets aside His anger to give us mercy. We experience a forgiven and free life because of His forgiveness. His forgiveness also brings restoration. Not only does God forgive us, but He also restores us to fullness in Christ. He heals us of the effects of sin and restores us fully. He not only forgives our sins' but He forgets them as well. We can stand before Him blameless, not because we are so great, but because His forgiveness in Christ Jesus is total and complete. Micah 7:19 says, "You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl our iniquities into the depths of the sea." God has mercy on us. He loves us and desires healing. God forgives us and forgets. He restores us and we are reborn. Mercy, forgiveness, and restoration through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. It is available through Him. We also receive everlasting life. The restoration is not for a day, week, month, or even a year, it is for the rest of eternity. Why eternity, because He is faithful. *"Nothing will separate us from the love of God that is found in Christ Jesus. Nothing!"* (Romans 8:38-39)

So how do we show mercy? Ultimately, Jesus is our model of mercy. It is He who demonstrated the merciful life by loving the unlovable. He forgave the woman caught in adultery and he pardoned her sin after dispersing the crowd. He feed the multitudes when they were hungry. He gave water to a Samaritan woman even though He knew it was against the Pharisaic law. We cannot have the blessing apart from the "Blesser." We cannot even meet the condition apart from the One who has set the condition. We are blessed by God when we are merciful to others, and we are able to be merciful to others because we have already received salvation's mercy. And when we share the mercy received, we shall receive mercy even beyond what we already have.

In order to show mercy, we must have first received mercy from God through His Son Jesus Christ by accepting Him as Lord and following Him in obedience. Then, we demonstrate mercy by forgiving others as we have been forgiven. While it is difficult for us to forget a wrong, we don't have to remind ourselves or others about the wrong. We are to forgive just as Jesus did for us. Ephesians 4:32 says, *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."* The words for kind and compassionate are related to the word mercy. Mercy results in kindness and compassion. If we abide in Christ, we will have mercy, compassion, kindness toward others. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*

Next, we show mercy by loving those around us. Our number one basic need other than food and water is love. Everyone desires it and we have experienced it in Jesus. We share that love for others by sharing Jesus Christ with them. His love never fails. Love of this magnitude also requires sacrifice. Ephesians 5:-2 says, *"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* Have you received mercy through God's Son, Jesus Christ? Are you sharing His mercy with others? Why will only merciful people find mercy from God in the judgment day, if salvation is by grace through faith? Matthew 5:7 says, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."* In other words, in the age to come when we meet God face to face, the people who will receive mercy from Him are people who have been merciful. Is this a salvation by works? Do we earn His mercy by our mercy? No, because an "earned mercy" would be a contradiction in terms. If mercy is earned, it is not mercy; it's a wage. If we get anything good at the judgment, it will be mercy - one hundred percent mercy!

When God asks for a record of our mercy at the judgment day, He will not be asking for a punched time card. We won't say, "Here it is, eight hours of mercy. Now where's my wage?" Instead, God will be asking for our medical charts. We will hand them to Him in all lowliness and meekness, and there He will read the evidences of how we trusted Him as our divine Physician, and how the medicine of His word and the therapy of His Spirit took effect in our lives, because we relied on them to heal us of our unmerciful disposition. And when He sees the evidence of our faith and His healing, He will complete our healing and welcome us into the kingdom forever. Therefore, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*