

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Blessed Are The Merciful

Text: Matthew 5:7

INTRODUCTION: The first four beatitudes deal with inner principals, that is the heart and mind. They are concerned with the way we see ourselves before God. The last four beatitudes are manifestations of those inward attitudes. The concept of mercy is seen throughout all of Scripture, from the fall to the end of the age.

Point 1 - The Meaning Of Mercy

The context of the time was not filled with merciful people. The Jewish religionist were not inclined to mercy. The common view of the day was similar to their view on love, you love those who love you, Matthew 5:46 *"If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?"* Some maintain that being merciful causes those around us, and especially those to whom we show mercy, to be merciful to us. Mercy given is mercy received. This principal doesn't work. Nor does it speak of what the text says.

Example: In Roman times a father had the right to say whether or not his new born child lived. If he looked strong, or was the sex he wanted, he gave a thumbs up or down. That is a definition of merciless. Cf. John 8:1-11, but note in the closing vs. 59 *"Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple."*

The more Jesus showed mercy, the more He showed up the unmerciful. The more determined the Jews were to kill Jesus.

This does not teach that mercy to men brings mercy from men, but that mercy to men brings mercy from God. If we are merciful to men, God will be merciful to us, whether or not men will be.

A working definition of mercy *"To feel sorry, have pity"* and is used particularly of God's mercy; giving undeserved kindness for forgiveness to those who do not deserve it. Mercy is a requisite quality of those who belong to God, 2 Corinthians 4:1 *"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart."* We can sum up the act of mercy as a tangible, visible action. It has been said, *"The people in My Kingdom are not takers but givers, not pretending helpers but practical helpers."*

Point 2 - Some Biblical Comparisons

The Gospel of Matthew

Mercy and Forgiveness, mercy and forgiveness have much in common. Our forgiveness of sins flows from God's mercy. But mercy is bigger, because God is merciful to us when we don't sin, just as we can be merciful to those who have never wronged us. Lamentations 3:22-23 "The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

Mercy and love, forgiveness flows out of mercy, and mercy flows out of love. Ephesians 2:4-5 "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ." This description is vital "Love manifests itself in many ways that do not involve forgiveness or mercy. Love loves even when there is no wrong to forgive or need to meet. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, although they are both without sin and without need. Mercy is the physician, love is the friend. Mercy acts because of need, love acts because of affection. Mercy is reserved for times of trouble, love is constant. There is no true mercy apart from love, but there is no true love apart from mercy."¹

Mercy and Grace, and grace which flows out of love just as forgiveness flows out of mercy. Grace and mercy have the closest possible relationship. Mercy and its related terms often have to do with pain, misery and distress. It's with these problems that mercy gives help. Grace, on the other hand, deals with sin itself. Mercy deals with symptoms and grace deals with the cause. Mercy eliminates the pain, grace cures the disease.

Point 3 - Biblical Truth About Mercy

Luke 10:30-37 - The Good Samaritan, in every act of mercy someone pays the price. God did in sending His Son, and to be merciful is to bear the load for someone else. Mercy led Abraham to rescue his selfish nephew Lot. Mercy led Joseph to forgive his brother and provide food. Mercy led Moses to plead with the Lord concerning his sister Miriam. Mercy led David to spare the life of Saul. Proverbs 11:17 "The merciful man does himself good, But the cruel man does himself harm." Cf. Matthew 25:41-45, James 2:13 "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment."

Point 4 - The Source And Practice Of Mercy

Pure mercy is a gift from God not a natural source of man. It comes with the new birth. We are blessed by God when we're merciful to others, and we're able to be merciful because we know what mercy is. We can now sing truthfully the old hymn "Mercy there

¹ The John MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Matthew, pp. 191

The Gospel of Matthew

was great and grace was free; pardon there was multiplied to me; there my burdened soul found liberty, at Calvary."

The practice of mercy didn't begin in the NT. Deuteronomy 15:7-8 *"If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks."*

Mercy is shown in our attitudes. Mercy does not hold a grudge, harbor resentment, capitalize on others' failures. Augustine said, *"Whoever think that he is able, to nibble at the life of absent friends, must know that he's unworthy of this table."* The merciful Christian will care for the lost souls, because he was once lost and knows the way of mercy. Jesus' last words were that of mercy from the cross, *"Father forgive them for they not what they do."*

Another area of mercy that's not often thought of is confronting people about their sin. Yes, it's merciful for you to share the gospel truth of sin with the lost, hoping that they will see the need for repentance. 2 Timothy 2:25 *"with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth."*

Point 5 - The Result Of Mercy

We cannot earn our way into heaven by endless merciful deeds. We must be saved by God's mercy so we can truly understand mercy. Cf. Matthew 18:23-35, thus we can conclude because we owe a debt we cannot pay, and the mercy of God forgave that debt, we too should be merciful.