

PP The King and His Kingdom

Part 7-Matthew 5:7 *Blessed are the merciful*

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In the Greco-Roman world at the time of Christ, mercy was considered the least of all virtues, 'the disease of the soul', a supreme weakness, the least desired of all virtues

The Romans glorified courage, strict justice, and power...they vehemently despised mercy

In Roman law, fathers had absolute power over family

A newborn baby was help up the father, and if he turned his thumb up the child lived, but if he turned his thumb down the child was rejected

Babies with deformities, handicaps, normally received the thumbs down, and they were either taken and left on the steps of the Roman forum, or immediately drowned

PP Aristotle wrote: *'Let there be a law that no deformed child shall be [raised].'*

Unwanted children were routinely picked up and trained for the brothel

Or worse even, deliberately maimed and then used by a professional beggar to draw sympathy and extract money from those passing by

The children were the exposed, they were the vulnerable in the Greco Roman world

Not much has changed in our day, as abortion clinics dispose of unwanted children

Or young children are sold into the sex industry and made slaves

The world strips mercy away and if Satan is allowed free reign, it is replaced with utter brutality

Illus I recently read a book that profoundly impacted me, 12 Years a Slave: The True Story of Solomon Northup. At one point, Solomon was sold to a new master who liked to gather his slaves on the Sabbath and preach to them, and his master came to **Luke 12:47**, ***"And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to His will, will receive a severe beating."*** He explained to his slaves that they must obey him, and if they didn't, God wanted them beaten with *'forty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty lashes.'* This false preacher's message was merciless and Christ-less, yet hardly unique

The Jewish world was also merciless, especially to the Gentile or Jew caught in terrible sin

PP The rabbis had a saying, *"There is joy before God when those who provoke Him perish from the world."*

The orthodox Jewish belief at the time of Christ forbade the helping of a Gentile mother giving birth, that Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell

It was unlawful to give medical attention to a renegade Jew who had turned away from Judaism

Friends, it is against these backdrops that the merciful people of God have shined so brilliantly

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." **Matthew 5:7**

This is the 5th statement of blessing in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus took aim at our hearts, and it doesn't always feel very good

He is the King of the kingdom of heaven, and this sermon is showing us what the citizens in His kingdom must be like, and what their lives must look like

The gospel focuses on *being* before it focuses on *doing*

We must be Christians before we can act as Christians, our hearts change before our lives do

And the beatitudes reveal the work that the gospel is doing in our hearts

Christians are broken people, continually being emptied of ourselves

Verse 3, our eyes are opened to our spiritual poverty, and our self-righteousness is decimated

Verse 4, our hearts mourn over our sin, our self-confidence is ruined

Verse 5, we learn the true wonder of meekness, the surrender of self-reliance
 Jesus is relentlessly emptying us of ourselves in this sermon, this is the process of sanctification,
 of becoming like Him, the aim of all Christian discipleship
 And then, verse 6, He shows the new desire of the emptied heart
 Just like empty stomachs yearn for food and drink, the one being emptied of self now yearns to be
 filled with Christ, with His righteousness
 It is to have an overarching, supreme desire to be like Christ
 Christian, when we are being emptied of ourselves, broken really, and are being filled with
 righteousness, the result will be hearts that are merciful, pure and peaceable
“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Matthew 5:7

PP 1-Mercy defined

Not one of these beatitudes are natural dispositions, or in other words, they aren't personalities
 A merciful person doesn't mean an easygoing person, or naturally kind person or someone who
 hates conflict and wants to be done with it so they sweep it under the rug
 As we near a definition of *mercy*, know that it is a companion to grace, it is distinct as well
PP Three times in each of his pastoral epistles, Paul's greeting goes like this: ***“Grace, mercy and peace from God...” 1 Timothy 1:2***
 There is a popular definition of the two which goes like this: Grace is getting what you don't
 deserve, and mercy is not getting what you do deserve
 While that definition accurately shows that neither grace or mercy are merited, or deserved, it
 doesn't precisely help us understand what they are
PP Grace is God's willingness and power to forgive the sins of the guilty
PP Mercy is God's willingness and power to relieve the misery those sins have brought about
PP God extends *grace* to the guilty, and He extends *mercy* to the miserable

We are to be full mercy, so let me give one more definition, and then show what it looks like
 What goes through your mind when you see a parent whose children are being disruptive?
 When you drive by a house whose yard is overgrown, with all kinds of stuff strewn about?
 What about when you walk into a shop whose owner barely speaks English?
 Or the man with a turban and full beard who takes the plane seat next to you?
 What do you feel when someone mentions a person who caused you great harm years ago?

Grace moves me to suspend my prejudice, my apathy, my perspective of the person
 Mercy moves me to help, to reach out, to love, to come alongside
 Grace moves me to forgive that person, grace moves me to restore the relationship if possible
 Grace moves me see the person as God does, mercy moves me to act toward him as God does
 A merciful person is one who sees someone in need, feels compassion, thinks wisely how to
 relieve the need and then does what he/she can
 And Jesus gives us a perfect picture of what it looks like in **Luke 10:30**

PP 2-Mercy pictured

Illus Years ago, two identical twin boys were born to a small-town store owner. They were
 inseparably close, and when their father died, they took over the business. The store was busy

and one of the brothers, in making change, absentmindedly left a dollar bill on top of the cash register instead of in it. He went to the front of the store to wait on a customer, but remembered he left the dollar on top, and went back to put it away. But it was gone. He asked his brother if he had seen it, but his brother hadn't. An hour later, he asked his brother again, but this time with a suspicious tone and the accused brother became angry and defensive. Every time they tried to discuss the matter, the conflict grew worse. The incredible outcome was that they dissolved their partnership, installing a partition down the middle of the store and began competing businesses.

Jesus gives a story that pictures the beauty of mercy and the ugliness of a merciless

PP *"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead."* **Luke 10:30**

A priest comes upon the beaten, half-dead man, sees him, crosses over to the other side, out of sight out of mind, and passes on, then a Levite-priest assistant-later does the same thing. But then a Samaritan, a half Jew, despised and hated by Jews, comes upon the victim.

PP *"But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'"* **Luke 10:33-35**

This is what mercy looks like: we see, we feel compassion, we do what is in our power to do. Doesn't matter the risk, doesn't matter the cost; doesn't matter if it's a friend, stranger, enemy. Mercy isn't selective, isn't self-concerned, isn't limited.

The Jewish religion, represented by the priest and Levite, had become mercilessly narrowed to only fellow Jews in good standing.

But Jesus, represented by the Samaritan, loves all and will show mercy to any who are in need. Christian, the goal of this beatitude is to make us like Jesus, that we would be merciful.

Illus Those two brothers I told you about...20 years after their rift, a car pulled up and a man entered one of the brother's shops. When he learned that this was one of the original owners, he said, 'I must settle an old score...twenty years ago I was out of work...I had absolutely no money and had not eaten for three days. I was walking down the alley behind your store, I looked in and saw a dollar bill on top of the register...I had been raised in a Christian home and I had never before in all my life stolen anything, but that morning I was so hungry I gave in to the temptation...and took that dollar bill. I finally decided that I would never be at peace until I came back and faced up to that old sin and made amends.' That old store owner stood there shaking his head and weeping. Finally he took the gentleman by the arm, and led next door to his brother and the man told the story again, only this time two old men wept side by side.

We forfeit much when we are merciless, but what rewards we gain when we are merciful.

PP 3-Mercy rewarded

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." **Matthew 5:7**

Throughout church history people have distorted this to mean God will save those the merciful.

But mercy is not something we earn or it would be a wage, and the only wage the bible talks about is the paycheck called death that sin earns for us

If Jesus meant that we earn God's mercy, then the entire gospel crumbles apart

PP ***"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*** Ephesians 2:8-9

Mercy cannot be earned or it can no longer be mercy

PP I believe Jesus has in mind two things: future mercy and present mercy

It is that day when we stand before Jesus, and He opens His books and sees the mercy that we have shown because He has so radically changed us, and He will mercifully bring us into our reward

I'll tell you what it doesn't mean, which too many people have misunderstood

If we show mercy, the world will see it, and be merciful to us

Church history, and the cross of Christ bear out not only is this not true, by Christ-like mercy can often earn the wrath of the world

It is final mercy that God will give us because our mercy bear out His gracious work in us

PP James 2:13. ***"Mercy triumphs over judgment"***, mercy will boast against judgment

The Christian woman who lives out mercy, demonstrates that God has taken her sins and misery away, and she confidently looks forward to the day she will stand before her God

When we come before God our merciful lives will testify to the authenticity of our faith

But there is present mercy that God gives to His merciful people

PP David, who was very much alive, said, ***"With the merciful you show yourself merciful"***
2 Samuel 22:25-29

This is not mercy as merit, but mercy as reward and God's blessings in our lives

What did David say in the most comforting Psalm in all the bible?

PP ***"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."*** Psalm 23:6

Here we have both *present and future* mercy and the reward of mercy permeates the bible

PP ***"Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land"***
Psalm 41:1-2

PP ***"Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."***
Proverbs 11:25

PP ***"The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"*** Ruth 2:12

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Matthew 5:7

PP 4-Mercy overcoming

I began this message by telling you how merciless the Roman-Greco world was

As your god is whom you worship, so shall you be, and Roman gods were merciless

But Christians in the 1st century began to penetrate this merciless world, spreading over all Rome

They taught that there was one God, Who came in the flesh to the people He created, to reconcile these people to Himself, and He inaugurated a new kingdom on earth

And these kingdom citizens began to think and act in new ways in obedience to their King

They never picketed, never directly opposed Caesar, never tried to politically overthrow Rome
 In fact, what distinguished them was not their ideologies, or politics, but their love and mercy
 They rescued cast away babies from the porches of Roman forums, raising them as their own
Patria Potestas was the Roman concept where the father had the power to kill his children or
 wives, but Christians taught a man to love his wife and children as Christ does the church
 During the time of Christ, Rome was a sexually depraved nation, but the church modeled purity
 The Christians began to care for the poor, the sick and the marginalized, so much so that the
 Roman people referred to them as ‘the third race’

Their love, weakening Roman imperial authority, began to overthrow of Roman mercilessness
 The last pagan emperor of Rome, Julien, understood the power of the love of the early church
PP *“These [irreligious Christians] not only feed their own, but ours also; welcoming them with
 their agape, they attract them, as children are attracted with cakes... Whilst the [faithful Roman]
 priests neglect the poor, the hated Galileans devote themselves to works of charity...Such
 practice is common among them, and causes contempt for our gods”* Emperor Julien

He saw the writing on the wall, and the Roman Empire, standing strong against political and
 military opposition, could not withstand the love of Jesus Christ seen in the church
PP His dying words in AD 363, translated, were "You Galileans [*Christians*] have conquered!"

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Matthew 5:7

Amen?

Pray