

Crossroads Baptist Church
April 11 & 25, 2007 6:30
Matthew 5: 7
Beatitudes: The Pursuit of Happiness #5

“Can You Be Happy and Merciful?”

The beatitudes are the evidences of the Kingdom life. They were not given as commands or steps to enter the kingdom, but the evidences of the changed life of those who have entered the kingdom. They certainly can expose the unregenerate and root out unbelief in the generate.

As we examined in a message March 7 that the real emphasis here is an inside job – an inner force- an inner change. It’s a new creation not an external religion.

AS we look further, we see that the people who belong to God’s kingdom are by their very new nature merciful.

The Talmud records a saying by Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul, “Whenever thou hast mercy, God will have mercy on thee. And if thou hast not mercy, neither will God have mercy upon thee.”

This almost appears to be a formula likened to..if you be nice to people, people will be nice to you.” But the opposite is also true if this is true...if people are not nice to you, then its because you are not nice to them.”

But this beatitude is not solely about giving something in order to receive something.

It would be great if people would be nice if we were nice; kind if we were kind; loving if we were loving. But that simply is not true and I’ll show you the greatest example of it in a moment.

When we speak of mercy, we’d love to think that this is such a highly valued human trait that everyone will applaud it and apply it. But in fact the opposite is true. It was in Rome’s day and ours. People admire revenge, vengeance, justice. Some philosophers have even written that mercy is a disease of the soul.

I. Let’s see mercy in the light of Jesus.

understanding the substance of mercy is...is not just the simple idea that if you're going to be merciful to somebody else, somehow they're going to make you rich, they're going to make you happy, they're going to make you prosperous, or they're going to be merciful to you. And the best illustration of that is Jesus. Was there

ever anyone more merciful than Him? He showed mercy to the sick. He showed mercy to the crippled and the blind and the deaf and the dumb. He showed mercy to the poor. He showed mercy to the outcasts, the prostitutes, the riffraff, the sorrowing, the lonely, the unloved. Once He stopped a funeral procession and He didn't even know the people personally but He stopped that procession to touch the casket and restore a young man back to life because He was so grieved at the sorrow of his widowed mother. He was merciful in John 8 to a harlot and said, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." He ate with tax collectors and sinners, a definite sign of His mercy toward the outcasts. Mark 2:16 says, "When the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners?'" From start to finish one would have to say that Jesus' life was a life of mercy.

If somehow there was some kind of principle that mercy carries its own reward, it never worked out for Him. If this was some inviolable human operative, form of truth that worked as truly as laws of science work, they would never have nailed the most merciful man who ever lived to a cross and spit on Him in the process. In fact, the most merciful person who ever walked the earth received from men no mercy at all from the very ones to whom He showed mercy. Two merciless systems, the Roman system and apostate Judaism, mercilessly came together to kill the merciful Son of God. And without mercy they came together to execute Him.

II. Let’s see mercy in the light of the Scriptures.

The word “merciful” is used here and in Hebrews 2:17 as the same form. The verb form is very common in the New Testament and the Septuagint. It means to care for the afflicted. It means to give help to the wretched. It means to rescue the miserable.

Thus....

A. Mercy is linked to lovingkindness and one’s ability to empathize.

As you can see from the very meaning of the word, it has to do with sympathy, compassion. It is the genuine, pure, divine compassion with unselfish motives that reaches out to help someone who is wretched, miserable, needy and poor.

Some time in the Septuagint it is translated “chesed” which is the word “lovingkindness.” It goes beyond sympathy.

William Barclay noted the Hebrew word (hesed) for "merciful" has the idea of

"the ability to get right inside the other person's skin until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind, and feel things with his feelings."

The greatest example of this is God in His lovingkindness and mercy got in our skin, and felt our pain.

Titus 3:5 "According to His mercy He saved us."

So....

B. Mercy is the foundation of forgiveness.

Mercy was behind forgiveness.

Titus 3: 5 "It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercies He saved us."

God's mercy or pity for us led to forgiveness.

Daniel 9:9 "To our Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him."

Psalms 130: 7-8 "O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord there is lovingkindness, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

We often think of mercy as God not judging us and it is. But the reason is He has forgiven our sin.

C. Mercy is the fountain of all God's good gifts.

Psalms 119: 64 "The earth is full of Thy mercies."

Genesis 32:10 "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies."

II Samuel 24:14 "For His mercies are great."

Nehemiah 9:19 "You, in Your manifold mercies"

Psalms 69: 13 "The multitude of Thy mercies."

Psalms 145: 9 "The Lord is good to all and His mercies are over all His works."

Lamentations 3:22-23 "The Lord's lovingkindness, or mercies, indeed never cease for His compassions never fail. They are new ever morning."

Verse 32 "He will have compassion according to His abundant lovingkindness."

All the gifts of God, all the kind expressions of His compassion and sympathy and mercy are a result of His grace.

Thomas Watson, the Puritan, wrote, "Every time you draw your breath, you suck in mercy. Every bit of bread you eat, the hand of mercy carries it to you. You never drink but in a golden cup of mercy."

D. Mercy is an expression of love.

Ephesians 2:4 "God being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us...."

Mercy flows out of love. It starts with love, become mercy and becomes forgiveness. Love is broader than mercy but incorporates mercy.

Thomas Watson said, "Mercy properly respects them that are miserable. Love is of a larger consideration. Love is like a friend that visits them that are well. Mercy is set just for the miserable, love is bigger, but mercy is an expression of love. Mercy, we might say, is a physician for the sick, love is a friend to everyone. Love acts out of affection. Mercy acts out of compassion. Love is constant; mercy is for times of misery. Love and mercy are different, but inseparable. If you are going to be merciful, you're going to love."

E. Mercy follows closely after grace.

Mercy deals with the aftermath of sin, grace deals with sin itself. Mercy looks at the misery sin produces, grace looks at the sin causing the misery. God gives grace for our sin and mercy for our misery. Grace offers pardon for the crime; mercy offers relief from the punishment.

Grace comes first and renders us no longer guilty; mercy follows and delivers us from the punishment.

F. Mercy never violates God's justice.

God can not be merciful if in some way it violates His justice. Mercy does not negate His justice or His holiness. In order for God to be holy and merciful, He had to pour out His justice on Christ on the cross satisfying the requirement of a just and holy God and His law in order that He might be merciful to the miserable sinners.

Mercy understands that we are not getting what we deserve. We deserve judgment without mercy

James 2: 13 "Judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy." Mercy triumphs over judgment. If you have received mercy, you won't be judged.

Nobody wants justice from God.

But God does not forsake His justice in order to have mercy.

Psalm 89: 14 “Righteousness and justice are the foundations of Your throne;...”

Exodus 34: 7 “He will be no means clear the guilty.”

God did not ignore or overlook the sin in Noah’s day.
God did not ignore or overlook the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.
God did not ignore or overlook Achan’s sin.

Psalm 5:5 “God hates all workers of iniquity.”
Psalm 7:11 “God is angry with the wicked every day.”

But in the person of Jesus, Psalm 85:10 is true: “Mercy and truth have met together.”

God never shows mercy without punishing sin, but God punished our sin in His Son.

G. Mercy understands the condition of man.

The reason we as believers can bear the insult and reach out with our hearts to those people is because we understand the miserable condition they are in. We remember what we were like and are quick not to react, but to act in mercy.

H. Mercy gives.

Psalm 37:21 “The righteous shows mercy and gives.”

It was mercy that caused Abraham to give Lot the first choice of land.
It was mercy that caused Joseph to give his brothers food and met their needs.
It was mercy that caused Moses to pray for Miriam to heal her after she was stricken with leprosy because of rebellion against him.
It was mercy that caused David to spare the life of Saul.

We are to give mercy because we have an adequate supply of it. Because.....

I. Mercy comes only from God.

Ephesians 2:4 “God who is rich in mercy...”
Psalm 103:11 “As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.”
Psalm 86: 5 “...and abundant in lovingkindness...”
Psalm 86:13 “For your lovingkindness toward me is great...”

Psalm 103: 17 “But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting...”

Micah 7:18 “He delights in mercy.”

II Corinthians 1:3 “The Father of all mercies...”

41 times “mercies endure forever.” I Chronicles 16:34; 41; II Chronicles 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Psalm 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 2, 3,4, 29; etc.

The mercy of God comes through the person of Jesus Christ. He is our mercy. And as Romans 3:25 declares that Jesus, “whom God set forth as propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed....”

It was at the cross we see the full mercy of God toward us.

“Mercy there was great and grace was free.
Pardon there was multiplied to me.
There my burdened soul found liberty, at Calvary.”

Thus, this beatitude follows the first four naturally.

And out of the mercy of God toward us, we are to show mercy to others. You cried out to God for mercy, and He granted it graciously to you. Now when someone else needs mercy, you are able to give because you have it within you.

III. Let’s see mercy in our life.

A. Mercy is shown by our life exemplifying the life of God.

Romans 12: 1 “I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice.”

We are to be dead to ourselves and alive to Him.

We are to live as Christ...with no retaliation; no vengeance; no holding of grudges; no slandering of someone else’s name; no gossiping; no flaunting of someone else’s sins; no demanding of our rights.

“Father, forgive them.”

B. Mercy is shown by the direction of our life.

I’m not saying that we will live perfectly in this area. This does not have to be demonstrated in the perfection of our live, but it has to be the direction of our life.

We are to continually be seeing ourselves poor in spirit; experiencing godly sorrow; broken to the will of the Father; and hungering and thirsting for that which we do not have; then we cast ourself on God's mercy.

I believe that if we don't demonstrate mercy, then it's a sign we've never receive authentic mercy. No one can be saved and say they've never received authentic mercy.

Again, these are not steps to salvation. He is not teaching you can have salvation by being merciful, but you can act in mercy as a result of salvation.

Thus we join David as he prayed again and again and again, "Be merciful to me, O God."

Psalm 86:3 "Be merciful to me, O God, for I cry to thee daily."

C. Mercy is shown by the way we respond to those who need to repent and those who do repent.

Being merciful person does not mean that we ignore a believer's outward sin.
Galatians 6:1 Paul confronted Peter Galatians 2: 11-14

Remember, Psalm 89:14 that God does set aside His righteousness and justice in order to be merciful.

But when a person we have confronted repents, then we forgive them and show mercy.

This attitude is also demonstrated to the lost.

Samuel Chadwick said, "There is no sterner test of grace than the attitude to the lost. Spirit-filled hearts are always tender, and they see men through the tears of holy compassion."

Mercy is not "giving them a piece of our mind" but "giving them a piece of our heart."

D. Mercy will show compassion on those who are in adversity.

Job 6: 14 "For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend;..."

Job was in the midst of some of the most tremendous storms that a person could possibly experience. God was putting Job's faith on display and was proving to the accuser of the brethren that true faith perseveres. But Job did not know what was going on, only God and Satan.

After Job lost all of his possessions, his ten children were killed and his wife tells him to "curse God and die." Then Job has visits from his three friends accusing him of some grievous sin. There was no mercy in their verbal treatment of Job. Compassion, pity and sympathy should have been shown to Job who was in the furnace of affliction.

We should

- Encourage them to adopt an attitude of gratitude.
- Encourage them to rely on the sovereignty of God.
- Encourage them to know that God knows what they are going through.
- Encourage them to submit to God's refining purpose in the storm.

E. Mercy shows pity on the poor.

Proverbs 14:21 "Happy is he who is gracious to the poor."

Proverbs 14:31 "He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him."

Psalm 41:1 "How blessed is he who considers the helpless..."