

The Beatitudes: Blessed Are the Merciful

A life of mercy goes far beyond simple kindness toward the possibility of true transformation.



The Transformation for Adult LifeGroups

Matthew 5:7

July 7, 2019

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Matthew 5:7**

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

FIRST THOUGHTS

What do you think are some of the ways people were grouped into categories during Jesus' time?

On what were these categories based?

What are some of the categories people are grouped into today?

What things have changed in the way we put people in categories since Jesus' time? What things have remained the same?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

A prevailing view for Jews in the first century included a close adherence to the Law, and the value of a person was often defined by whether they kept the rules or did not. Then, as today, the "law" also became convenient for asserting one's will against another. A person who touted the greatness of a law (as first century religious leaders did) was not always as concerned with the law as much as they wanted to use the law to assert their own preferences, assessments, or judgments.

John chapter 8 recounts for us a clear example of this kind of behavior as the religious leaders attempted to use the unlawful act of one woman in an attempt to trap Jesus and delegitimize Him. It's a somewhat complex plan that potentially could leave a lot of damage in its wake.

He tells the woman to go and sin no more, but He makes it clear to her that He does not condemn her. Jesus' mercy is not about approval of sin or agreement with sin, but it is about forgiveness of sin and valuing her. This is Jesus' mercy in action. And this brings clear context for us when considering what Jesus says in the Beatitudes: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Today we are going to look at this verse in two parts:

- 1) MERCY, FORGIVENESS, AND SPACE
- 2) MERCY NEEDED

EXPLORE THE TEXT

MERCY DEFINED

To be merciful means to have compassion on someone. Rather than retuning harm to a person, you seek to do them good. Mercy chooses not to repay evil for evil, but rather to "overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21). And then forgiveness takes it one step further. Mercy, then, is like a stepping stone to forgiveness.

MERCY, FORGIVENESS, and SPACE

Consider Peter during what was likely his darkest moment. As Peter disowned Jesus three times, the last few sentences of this account in Luke 22 are: ⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow (Peter) was with him (Jesus), for he is a Galilean." ⁶⁰ Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly."

As Peter denied Jesus a third time, Jesus looked at him. If he'd done this to me, I probably would have looked at Peter with judgment, but knowing Jesus' character the words mercy, forgiveness, and space come to mind.

- Mercy: Jesus overcomes evil with good.
- Forgiveness: Peter was freed from the bitter experience of what he had done (Luke 22:62), and then even propelled into meaningful purpose (John 21:15-17).
- Space: Jesus allowed space for Peter to process what had transpired.

- Are you more focused on your expectations of others or God's expectations of you? How do these play out differently?
- Have you ever felt that your sins disqualify you from receiving the mercy that Jesus offers? Do you know others who feel this way? Look at the account when Peter disowns Jesus. What does that tell us about Jesus' willingness to offer mercy and forgiveness?

MERCY NEEDED

Mercy is an important part of our lives, as believers in Jesus, in our world that is broken by sin. When mercy is absent from our lives, there is so much that is missed, especially in regard to our relationship with others and with God.

OFFERING MERCY: God calls His children to show mercy to others. He opens a lot of doors for us to do this. Here are some opportunities:

- When fellow believers are struggling in their walk with God.
 - How have you acted toward people (about people) who had questions about God or doubts in their faith? In what ways can you show mercy to them?
- When someone fails in a way that may bring them shame or embarrassment.
 - How are we as individuals to respond to a Christian friend who has had a moral failure? How is the church to respond?
- When someone personally wrongs you.
 - Mercy is a significant step toward forgiveness of the person who has spoken or acted against you. And forgiveness is not just for the one who wronged you, it also is freeing for you.
 - What are the ramifications of holding a grudge against someone who has wronged you? How does this impact you? How does this impact others around you? As a follower of Jesus, how does grudge-holding impact your own spiritual health, and your testimony?
 - How does mercy that leads to forgiveness benefit you and the person in the wrong?
 - Jesus says that people who are merciful are blessed because they will be shown mercy. Our own treatment of others certainly impacts how others will treat us. Is there someone that you are withholding mercy from? What will it take to offer mercy to them? (It's good to remember here that showing mercy does not mean that you approve or agree with their actions.)

RECEIVING MERCY: God shows mercy on us, despite our sin against Him. As Romans 5:8 says: *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* All of us have sinned, yet God still shows mercy (compassion) to us. This sets the foundation for the forgiveness He offers through Jesus.

- GOD'S MERCY – For the person who doesn't yet have a relationship with Jesus.
 - Have you responded to God's mercy and trusted in Jesus for forgiveness of sin?
 - Does your understanding of God's mercy impact others around you who do not understand God's mercy?
 - How would you describe the way God's mercy works in your own life to someone who is not yet a follower of Jesus?
- GOD'S CONTINUED MERCY – For the person who already has a relationship with Jesus, God's continued mercy is important as we follow Him, respond to Him, and find our place in His purpose.
 - If you are already a follower of Jesus, are you ever reluctant to respond to God's mercy and turn toward Him in repentance? What causes this reluctance?
 - When you are intentionally living in the continuing mercy of God, do you find that you are more merciful to others?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

As you go through the week, and think on Jesus' example of mercy, consider this prayer:

God, I know I'm called to be merciful and forgive others. I confess that there are people in my life I don't want to forgive. Help me fully appreciate Your compassion for me and forgiveness of me so that I can take that posture toward others. Amen

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- As you read God's Word this week, ask Him to help you identify how your own preferences, loyalties, assessments, and judgment may be preventing you from extending mercy and forgiveness toward others. None of these are bad when surrendered to Jesus, but they can be an obstacle toward experiencing a life of mercy as Jesus modeled for us.
- Next week, we will be exploring what it means to be pure in heart.

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

7th – Hosea 10-12; Psalm 73; Hebrews 4 | **8th** – Hosea 13-14; Psalm 100, 102; Hebrews 5 | **9th** – Micah 1-4; Hebrews 6 | **10th** – Micah 5-7; Hebrews 7 | **11th** – Isaiah 8-10; Hebrews 8 | **12th** – Isaiah 11-14; Hebrews 9 | **13th** – Isaiah 15-18; Hebrews 10