

Blessed are the Merciful

Mt 5:7

INTRODUCTION

- A. When the infidel Robert Ingersoll was delivering lectures, he could be assured that his oratorical ability would draw a large crowd.
1. One evening while he was lecturing, he dramatically took out his watch and said, "I'll give God a chance to prove that he exists & is almighty. I challenge him to strike me dead within 5 minutes!"
 2. First, there was silence, and then some people became uneasy. But, at the end of the allocated time, the atheist exclaimed decisively, "See! There is no God. I am still very much alive!"
 3. After the lecture, a young man said to a Christian lady, "Well, Ingersoll certainly proved something tonight!"
 - a. Her reply was quite memorable.
 - b. "Yes, he did," she said. "He demonstrated that even the most defiant sinner cannot exhaust the patience of God in just 5 minutes!"
- B. How grateful we ought to be that God's mercy cannot be exhausted in 5 minutes!
1. God is full of mercy.
 - a. "You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy" (Micah 7:18, NIV).
 - b. "Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful" (Joel 2:13).
 - c. "God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:4).
 - d. God "saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy" (Tit 3:5).
 2. A woman who lived a very destitute life was once taken by a group of friends to see the ocean.
 - a. As they arrived at the beach, the woman began to sob uncontrollably.
 - b. Her friends, who had spent considerable money on this trip, were puzzled as to why this lady was crying at the sight of the ocean. She simply replied, "This is the first time in my life that I've seen something that there was enough of."
 3. God's mercy is very much like that--there is enough of it!
- C. Because God is merciful, he expects his children to be merciful.
1. Scripture contains many admonitions for us to be merciful.
 - a. "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, NIV).
 - b. "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36).
 2. During the chaos immediately following the end of World War II, eight Poles & Lithuanians early in 1946 attacked the isolated farmhouse of a man named Wilhelm Hamelmann, who lived in Germany.
 - a. They machine-gunned to death Hamelmann's four children, his wife, his parents, and her parents.
 - 1) Hamelmann himself was shot four times and presumed dead.
 - 2) But he recovered.
 - b. Two decades later he owned a pharmacy & was active in a congregation of God's people.
 - 1) He had remarried & had four children.
 - 2) Suddenly, he learned that one of the murderers, Czeslaw Godlewski, a native of Lithuania, had completed a twenty-one year term in a Hamburg prison.
 - a) He couldn't be released, however, because Germany refused to let him stay in that country, nor would Poland nor the Soviet Union, allow him into their countries, either.
 - b) Hamelmann had in an abstract way forgiven the men years earlier, but now he put that forgiveness into practice. He offered to take Godlewski into his own home, take legal

responsibility for him, and give him a room.

c. That's mercy!

D. This fifth Beatitude deals with mercy--"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Mt 5:7).

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

A. Just what is mercy?

1. Mercy is primarily a state of mind, or attitude, toward men.
2. "Merciful" implies a desire to remove the evils that one faces. The merciful are those who pity, sympathize with, and help to relieve all misery & suffering.
3. There is a distinct difference between mercy & grace.
 - a. Mercy always deals with what we see of pain, misery, & distress.
 - b. Grace always deals with the sin & guilt itself.
4. Mercy, then, is an attempt to alleviate suffering, while grace forgives sin & guilt.

B. In the fullest sense, mercy is more than a feeling; it is action.

1. An examination of the Scriptures demonstrates that mercy is action.
 - a. The parable of the "Good Samaritan" shows this (READ Lk 10:30-37).
 - 1) A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers who left him half dead.
 - 2) A priest & a Levite both came along and saw him & passed by on the other side.
 - 3) A Samaritan came along & took care of the man.
 - 4) Jesus asked the lawyer who had tried to trick him which of the three was a neighbor to the man who fell among thieves. The lawyer answered, "The one who showed him mercy" (Lk 10:37).
 - a) The Good Samaritan did not simply feel mercy for the man he saw on the side of the road.
 - b) The Good Samaritan "showed him mercy"--i.e., he acted.
 - b. A man came to Jesus & said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water" (Mt 17:15)--This man didn't want Jesus to feel sorry for his son, but he wanted action--he wanted Jesus to heal his son.
 - c. When the publican cried out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Lk 18:13)--He wanted action--he wanted God to forgive his sins.
 - d. When the ten lepers cried out to Jesus, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Lk 17:13)--they wanted action, viz., to be cleansed.
2. Personally involving ourselves with suffering people means more than simply sending a check to some worthwhile cause; we must be personally involved with the sick, the suffering, & the distressed around us.

C. How can we show mercy?

1. Showing mercy is a must.
 - a. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).
 - b. "As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10).
2. We can show mercy by praying.
 - a. All men are subject to suffering & temptations; therefore, all men need God's grace. Imploring God to demonstrate his grace to the hurting is a way that we can demonstrate mercy.
 - b. The Word of God teaches us to pray for those around us.
 - a. We must pray for all men: "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" (1 Tm 2:1).
 - b. We must pray for our enemies: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44).
 - c. We must pray for the lost: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved" (Rom 10:1).
3. We can show mercy by caring for physical needs.
 - a. Many individuals have great physical needs, and we Christians can help with those needs.

- 1) "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (Js 1:27).
- 2) "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 Jn 3:17).
- b. Jesus, our Lord, cared about the physical needs of those around him.
 - 1) When the multitude which continued with Jesus had no food, he fed them with seven loaves of bread and a few fish (Mt 15:32-38).
 - 2) Jesus "went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people" (Mt 4:23).
4. We can show mercy by caring for spiritual needs.
 - a. The spiritual needs of men are **far** more important than their physical needs.
 - b. The Scriptures teach us to care for man's spiritual needs.
 - 1) "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Gal 6:1).
 - 2) "Let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (Js 5:20).
5. We can show mercy by abstaining from cruelty.
 - a. All forms of cruelty are diametrically opposed to mercy; mercy aims not to inflict pain but to heal it.
 - b. The Word of God teaches us to abstain from cruelty.
 - 1) "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Eph 4:29).
 - 2) "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person" (Col 4:6).
 - c. The world to which Jesus spoke this Beatitude was cruel.
 - 1) The Romans despised pity & the Stoics taught that compassion was a vice.
 - 2) The popular entertainment of the day was the gladiator contests where humans were torn to pieces by wild animals.
 - 3) Unwanted children were abandoned. Aristotle said, "Let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared."
- D. The Pharisees neglected mercy in their lives.
 1. The biblical description of the Pharisees demonstrates that they had no mercy.
 - a. Jesus told the Pharisees, "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'" (Mt 9:13).
 - b. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others" (Mt 23:23).
 2. Are we showing mercy, or are we like the Pharisees & ignoring mercy?

THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY

- A. Those who show mercy shall receive mercy.
 1. This is biblical teaching.
 - a. "With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless" (Ps 18:25).
 - b. "If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt 6:14-15).
 - c. The parable of the unforgiving servant shows this (READ Mt 18:21-35).
 - 1) A certain king wanted to settle accounts.
 - a) A man was brought before him who owed a great amount of money. The man couldn't pay so the king ordered him sold with his family & all that he had and that payment be made.
 - b) The servant begged for mercy & he was forgiven of his debt.

- 2) This servant went out & found one who owed him a small amount of money.
 - a) He ordered the servant to pay.
 - b) The servant could not & begged for mercy, but his fellow servant threw him into prison until he could pay the debt.
 - 3) When the king heard of this, he became angry & delivered the servant to the torturers until he could pay all that was due.
 - 4) Jesus concludes the parable by saying, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Mt 18:35).
2. John Chrysostom once said, "Mercy imitates God and disappoints Satan."
- B. Are you showing mercy? Is mercy, therefore, being shown to you?

CONCLUSION

- A. We must be merciful. If we are merciful, God will be merciful toward us.
- B. God has great mercy. Do you know that mercy?