

**THE FIFTH BEATITUDE**

Matthew 5:7

**Intro:** “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

I hope that it is clear to all of us that in these Beatitudes the Lord was defining the spiritual characteristics of the people of God who are blessed, or happy. It would be wonderful if we could say that these characteristics describe all of us, but that unfortunately is not the case. It would be wonderful if it were true of all of us, but it isn't. It *may* be true of all of us, and *should be*, but that is dependent upon how much each of us has grown in grace. We can say that it is true of us to varying degrees, but, I repeat, the extent that they describe each of us is dependent upon our relationship with the Lord and our growth in Him.

It would be expected that the Lord would approach this subject in a very reasonable manner, instead of being haphazard. So He began by speaking of the great importance of humility – being “poor in spirit.”

Then, in the second Beatitude, He went on to speak of grieved we need to be about our sins and our sinful nature. We may be quick to notice the faults of the Apostle Peter in the early days of his apostleship, but how many of us have come to see how really sinful we are to the extent that we would say to the Lord, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8).

Those first two Beatitudes lead on to and produce the third: meekness. I hope you remember that this has to do with the deep sense that the first two Beatitudes give us of our unworthiness of our salvation. We have been saved because God has set His love upon us, not because we are worthy of His love. When the Apostle Paul said about Christ, that He came into the world to save sinners, he added, “Of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15). To be able to say that from the heart, is true meekness.”

Last Sunday night we had the Beatitude that speaks of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the fourth Beatitude. As we grow in the Lord we realize that sin is still our greatest enemy, the sin in our hearts. And we realize that we can't deal effectively with our sin. But God has given us His Word, and He has given us a love for His Word, and we love it because it is through the Word that God is making us like Himself, and like our Lord Jesus Christ, Who are righteous. This is God's main pur-

pose in saving us – to make us like the Lord Jesus. God is righteous and Christ is righteous, and so to hunger and thirst after righteousness is to long to be like God, and like Christ. We will never be totally like they are because They are God, but we need to become God-like, or God-ly. But to become like they are needs to be, by far, the greatest desire of our lives, the one desire that is supreme over all others.

Now you and I need to be checking ourselves constantly by the Beatitudes. We need to ask ourselves, Do these Beatitudes really describe me? They should! We all have to confess that we still have a long way to go with each of them, but we can thank the Lord for the progress He has enabled us to make, and then pray that He will help us to make even more progress today and tomorrow and every day.

Tonight we come to the fifth of these Beatitudes, these markers on God's way to a truly happy life. It is not a life without trials and testings, but in it all there is increasing joy as we set our hearts on being, by His grace, what He wants us to be, and what He has ordained that we will be.

What is the fifth Beatitude? Hear it again. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Now you can see immediately that if we are going to "obtain mercy," this means that by nature we don't have it. We may see traces of this in people, as we see it in ourselves, because we have been made in the likeness of God. But we don't have the mercy of God until we are saved. And let me give you a statement of Scripture to prove what I have just said. You will find it in Romans 5, verses 6, 7 and 8. Let me read them to you:

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Paul admitted that there might be times when we would give our lives for a truly good person, but he recognized that none of us would do what God Christ did when He died for us. We were not good, but bad, sinners and enemies of God, and of Christ, and of everything that we good and holy in their sight. Not only did Christ die for us, but God sent Him into the world for that specific purpose.

I cannot think of a greater act of mercy than the death of Christ. Even as He was dying on the Cross, covered with blood, and suffering as no one had ever suffered before Him, nor after Him, yet He cried out to His Father with the crowd in full agreement with what the soldiers had done to Him, He said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). If you want an illustration of mercy, this is one which cannot be surpassed.

The Apostle Paul had this in mind he wrote in Ephesians 2: 1-7,

- 1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
- 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
- 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
- 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
- 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
- 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:
- 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

But what is “mercy,” or what is it to be “merciful”? It is to have a feeling of compassion for the misery of others, coupled with the desire to do something about it, even though they don’t deserve it, nor want it. You see, knowing the Lord and growing to be like the Lord, changes our feelings even about people who do not know the Lord and about their miseries. And since we as Christians often have miseries, it changes our attitude toward our fellow believers.

If there is one word that characterizes life in this world, it is the word, misery. And misery is the result of sin. The people of the world are inclined to think of behavior that the Bible condemns as fun, as the way to happiness. And they are really blinded to the misery and tragedy of sin and go on in what the Bible calls sin hoping to find true happiness in immorality and perversion and dishonesty and even murder. But there is

also misery that touches all of us in sickness and death. Or in poverty. These people who are involved in the demonstrations that are taking place all over our country think that if they can get their hands on the money of rich people, they will be happy. But the truth is that some of the most miserable people in the world are the people who have lots of money.

Even take discouragement which often touches all of our lives, and the various worries that we all are inclined to have. Not all misery is sin, but misery wherever it is, is an opportunity for us to show mercy. You don't have to go out of our church today to find people who are discouraged and need mercy. And do much of mercy that we as Christians have access to, doesn't cost a penny to exercise it.

What is one major reason that we need to pray? Let me remind you of Hebrews 4:14-16:

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

So we have a twofold truth here. The first is that God is merciful. The second is that He wants us to be merciful. And this is a major factor in living a happy life. It is one of the miracles of the grace of God that seeking to relieve the unhappiness of others, and making them happy, makes us happy. Saving us give God the greatest pleasure, and when we show mercy to others and relieve at least a part of their pain, we share in their joy.

I am sure that most of you, perhaps all of you, could quote for me Psalm 23. Have you paid close attention as to how that Psalm ends? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." We need God's mercy for our miseries every day of our lives.

I don't know how many times in the Psalms you find the Psalms praying, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord," or, "O God," but there are lots of them, and lots of reasons why the Psalmist felt their need for mercy. When David prayed his prayer confessing his sins, he began his prayer with

these words, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: accord unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psa. 51:1). And what about Psalm 33:18:

18 Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.

And then there is Psalm 103:17:

17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children.

So it is inexhaustible. It is the same from generation to generation.

But our Beatitude is not about the mercy of God, but upon how we show mercy to the misery of others. I call your attention again to the progress that our Lord was indicating in the order in which He gave these Beatitudes, from the first to the fifth. We know that God is merciful, but have we experienced that feeling of mercy and compassion to our fellow-believers and even to those who do not know the Lord? I am sure that we have. But we need to keep our eyes open and our hearts compassionate toward the miseries that are all around us

When the Lord was asked what was the greatest commandment in the Law, He responded by giving not just the first, but also the second. And you all know what that is: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8). And all of these are from Lev. 19:18. The word “neighbor” can refer to unbelievers as well as believers, and we probably have more unbelieving neighbors than we do believers.

But how do we show mercy? The first answer to that question is, by prayer. This is very, very important. Our Lord used prayer again and again, and even from the Cross as I have mentioned. The Lord prayed for people even though they had not asked Him to pray, and didn’t know that He was praying. We can pray for people we don’t even know, nor do they know us.

A second way is by words of encouragement. If it is not possible for us to be with any person who is discouraged, we can write to them. There is a real ministry in writing letters. The epistles of the NT fall into this category. Paul and Peter and James and John were all encouragers, showing mercy with their pens.

## Matthew 5:7 (6)

Among the examples that we have in Scripture from the teachings of the Lord is the parable of the good Samaritan. You will find it in Luke 10:30-37. It had to do with man, evidently a Jew, who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho “and fell among thieves.” The thieves stripped of his raiment, wounded him, and left him half dead. A priest came by, and walked by on the other side of the road. A Levite did the same. Neither one did anything to help him, and both of them should have. But a Samaritan came by, dressed his wounds, put him on his animal, and took him to an inn, “and took care of him.” But he had to leave the wounded man the next day, and so he told the host of the inn, “Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” And then the Lord asked those He was teaching, “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And the lawyer to whom the Lord was speaking said, “He that showed mercy upon him. Then said Jesus unto him, “Go, and do thou likewise.” And all of this was after the Lord had given that lawyer the two main commandments in the Law.

Greek lexicon (which is another word for a dictionary told me that the word mercy has more to do with acts than it does with just words.

Now none of us may be able to do what that Samaritan did, but I am sure that we can all do more than we do. Dr. Bruce Waltke told us about a seminary student who divorced his wife, and left her without any money to take care of herself or her children. He and Mrs. Waltke were able to help them over a period of time until this wife was able to support her children.

There are little things that can be done. I heard a story years ago about some teenage boys who were passing by a widow’s home and saw a load of wood that had been delivered in her yard. They went to work, split the wood and stacked it, and went on their way refusing the money that the lady had offered them for pay. I don’t know if those boys were believers or not, but I know that they knew what mercy is. And I can assure you that they went on their way with a happiness in their hearts that money could not buy.

There are many passages especially in Matthew, Mark and Luke which tell us about the ministry of our Lord upon the earth. One of these is in Matthew 9:35-38. Listen as I read what it tells us:

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in

Matthew 5:7 (7)

their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Notice the word about Jesus that “He was moved with compassion on them. This is what it means to have mercy. So the Lord Jesus practiced what He preached.

Just a few weeks ago we had Drs. John and Angela Condie with us for our evening service. Both of them are medical doctors. I am sure that they could have practices here at home, but you all know what they are doing. They work at the Bach Christian Hospital in Pakistan. Now the Lord doesn't lead all people the same way, but this was their way of showing mercy to people that otherwise might not have medical help, but even more importantly, might now ever hear the Gospel.

One final word, and I am through although I hope that the Lord will use our text tonight in all of our lives in greater ways. Our Beatitude says, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. “The merciful” are not people who help others once in a while. You and I who know the Lord are to be know as merciful people, people of compassion, people who care when there is no one else to care. The more merciful we are, the greater will be our happiness. The Lord stands behind His Word. We become instrument of mercy to others, and the Lord promises mercy for us. And the result for all is that we and they are blessed.