

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Matthew 5:7

Intro: We come today to the fifth Beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). Or, as with the other Beatitudes we could translate it, *Happy are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

Let us begin by defining mercy.

I. THE DEFINITION OF MERCY.

In order to define *mercy*, the best place to look is to the Members of the Godhead. Over and over again in the OT we are told that the Lord is “good,” and that “His mercy endureth for ever.” In Psalm 136 the eternal nature of God’s mercy is declared in each of the twenty-six verses.

The first time we are introduced to this statement is in 1 Chron. 16 and the Psalm which David composed to praise the Lord after they had succeeded in bringing the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. The Psalm covers verses 8 through 36 in 1 Chron. 16, but in the book of Psalms we find verses 8 through 22 in Psalm 105:1-15, verses 23 through 33 in Psalm 96:1-13, and verses 33 and 34 in Psalm 106:7-8. The particular verses in 1 Chron. 16 which give us this statement about the mercy of the Lord, are verses 34 and 41. Let me read those verses to you.

The first verse that I will read to you is a part of the Psalm, and it was sung by Asaph and his brethren at David’s direction. This is its most familiar form:

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever (1 Chron. 16:34).

When they had finished singing the Psalm, then we are told about the men who were left with the ark of the covenant of the Lord to offer sacrifices to the Lord. There must have been quite a large group of men who, as the Scriptures tell us, “were expressed by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because His mercy endureth for ever” (1 Chron. 16:41b).

So we are told more than once in the OT that God’s mercy is to be one main reason for *giving thanks to the Lord!* And think of it: “His mercy endureth for ever!” The supply of God’s mercy can never be exhausted! In fact, Jeremiah had this to say about the mercy of God in Lam. 3:22-23:

22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed,

because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. Day after day, and generation after generation, the people of God have depended upon the mercies of the Lord, and the supply is just as great today as it ever has been.

But just what are we talking about when we speak of the mercy of the Lord? We are talking about His compassion. We are speaking about how He takes pity on us in our needs, meeting those needs, and working everything together for good.

Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, wrote that “it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” This is an excellent definition of mercy because it shows that God is the source of all mercy. We are the needy ones, and God alone has the resources which are adequate to meet our needs.

But let us remember that mercy, like grace, is undeserved.

Our Lord illustrated mercy, using the words “compassion” and “pity” in the parable He told of the king who had a servant who owed him ten thousand talents. The servant did not have the money to pay him, and so the king demanded that the servant, his wife, and his children, and all that he had be sold so that the king could get his money. Then we read this in Matt. 18:26-27:

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

I won't take up the rest of the story, but I give you this part to emphasize what *mercy* is. The servant did not deserve to be forgiven, but because of the king's compassion, he gave the servant what he needed, but did not deserve.

In our Scripture reading this morning we had another illustration of mercy. Let me re-read the account of the two blind men, and I want you to notice the basis of their appeal to the Lord. I am reading again from Matt. 20, beginning with verse 30:

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold

their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him (Matt. 20:30-34).

What right did they have to ask for their sight? None at all. What did they plead? They pled for His mercy. And Matthew said that “Jesus had compassion on them.” *That is mercy!*

And let us remember that God has mercy upon all. Right here in Matthew 5 we have an excellent illustration of how generous God is with His mercy. Follow me as I read Matt. 5:43-48. (Read.)

That is mercy when we love our enemies, and when God sends the rain upon the just and the unjust. When Paul was preaching on Mars Hill in Athens, this is one of the things that he said, speaking of God:

Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things (Acts 17:25).

That is mercy.

Let me give you another illustration from Psalm 145:

8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing (Psa. 145:8-16).

But let us take our thoughts about the mercy of God a step farther:

II. THE MERCY OF GOD IN SALVATION.

One of the passages we have been learning in our Bible Memory groups is Eph. 2:1-3. It is a passage which speaks of what we all were and what we all did before we were saved. Let me refresh your memory on those verses:

- 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 (Eph 2:1-3).

When you think of mercy, think of misery. And Paul could hardly have described a more miserable condition than what we have here in these verses in Ephesians 2. How did we ever get out of all of that? Paul tells us beginning with Eph. 2:4:

- 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 (Eph. 2:4-7).

Did you and I deserve to be saved? Absolutely not! What did we deserve? We deserved to be cast forever out of the presence of the Lord? Then why were we saved? Because God is “rich in mercy,” and because He loved us, and exercised His grace toward us.

Titus 3:5-7 tells us the same thing:

- 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
- 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
- 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Psalm 117, the shortest Psalm in the book of Psalms, exalts the merciful kindness of God. In just two short verses this is what we have:

- 1 O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.
- 2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD (Psa. 117:1-2).

So in salvation we have become the recipients of the mercy of God, and the grace of God, and the love of God, and the kindness of God, and the faithfulness of God. *And there is not one bit of it that we deserve.*

This leads me to my third point which comes out of our text.

III. CHANNELS OF GOD'S MERCY.

We as the people of God have received God's mercy in salvation, and we are the recipients of God's mercy over and over again every day that we live. When the Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful," He was not speaking of those acts of mercy that we often see even in people who do not know the Lord, but He was speaking of His people, people who have experienced in their souls the mercy of God. We, in daily life, are to be instruments, channels, through whom the mercy of God reaches others. That is why we are told to love our enemies, and to pray for them who despitefully use us. That is why we are told to forgive those who have sinned against us. How can we do otherwise when God has forgiven us of so much?

Listen to what Paul told the Colossian believers to do. I am reading from Col. 3:12-17:

- 12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
- 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
- 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.
- 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.
- 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Col. 3:12-17).

Did you notice that expression, “bowels of mercies”? The NKJ translates that, “put on tender mercies.” The NASB renders it, “put on a heart of compassion.” The NIV has it, “clothe yourselves with compassion.” What it means is that since we have received the mercy of God in salvation, we are to show that mercy to others in our relationships with them, whether we are dealing with Christians, or people who are not Christians. And it means that we as husbands and wives are to show mercy to each other. Parents show mercy to their children, and children to their parents. It does not mean that we overlook wrongs, but it does mean that we manifest the compassion toward others that the Lord is always manifesting toward us. And wherever we can, we do what we can to help people through the miseries which come upon us all in this life, and the greatest help we can give anyone is to tell them about our merciful Savior Who saves sinners from their sins.

Now, as in all of the Beatitudes we have had up to today, I have the privilege of passing on to you

IV. THE LORD’S PROMISE.

You can see it there in your Bible: “For they shall obtain mercy.”

The term, “the merciful,” is a title for those of us who know the Lord. We have experienced God’s mercy in salvation. But we also have Christ living in our hearts, and He is the One Who makes us merciful and the One Who enables us to be merciful to others. And our Lord’s promise to us is that as we become instruments of mercy to others for our Lord’s glory, we find that in special ways God’s mercies continue to come our way as we need God’s mercies from day to day.

This is OT truth as well as NT truth. In Psa. 18:25a we read, “With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful...” And in Prov. 11:17 we read that “the merciful man doth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.” And in the same chapter, verse 25, we read, ”The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.”

But undoubtedly the highest example of receiving mercy was stated by our Lord when He will gather the nations before Himself, separating the sheep from the goats. And He will say to the sheep on His right hand the follow-

ing which we find in Matt. 25:31-40:

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Whenever you and I manifest the mercy of God in order to please God, the Lord accepts this as if we were doing it directly for Him. And the Lord even said this:

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (Matt. 10:42).

Concl: We are living in an increasingly violent society where people know little or nothing about mercy, especially the amazing mercy of God. Those of us who know Him how great His mercy is. May God enable us to show the mercy of God to others, not for our glory, but for the Lord's glory. The life of a Christian is to be so different from those who are walking according to the course of this world. And often, when they see the evidence of God's mercy, this is what the Lord may be pleased to us to cause them to ask us a reason of the hope that is in us. And then we can tell them about our Savior. Let us never forget this Beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

