

Blessed Are the Merciful

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Date: 20 October 2024

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[0 : 00] Amen. You may be seated, kids. You are dismissed to your King's Kids classes. And if I would invite you to open up to your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 5.

We've been making our way through the Beatitudes, the very beginning of Jesus' Kingdom Manifesto. So, I'm going to read Matthew 5, 1 through 10.

Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[1 : 20] And may God bless the hearing of His word. One of the things that I've been trying to draw to your attention as we've been making our way through the Beatitudes is the purposeful sequence to the Beatitudes.

It's not just thrown together. It's purposeful. And this fifth Beatitude that we're in, blessed are the merciful, represents a development in that sequence.

And so, the first Beatitude, blessed are the poor in spirit, we're being told we need to declare spiritual bankruptcy before God. Blessed are those who mourn. Not only are we to declare spiritual bankruptcy, but we are to have this godly grief over our sin against God.

Blessed are the meek. When we see ourselves as God sees us, it is humbling. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Caleb, thank you so much for preaching last week on this. This exceeding righteousness. This inward righteousness. This beautiful and refreshing righteousness.

[2 : 24] Not only for our own souls, but beginning for the souls around us. And now we come to the fifth Beatitude. Blessed are the merciful.

And what Jesus is getting at is our posture of heart towards those in need around us. So let me ask you a question.

What is your typical response when you encounter a person in need?

Maybe it's a material need for money, for transportation, food, clothing. Or maybe it's an emotional need. Someone is emotional, in emotional distress.

Maybe it's a relational need. You encounter someone who is in a strained relationship with someone else. What's your response? Spiritual needs.

[3 : 31] Is your typical response one of a tenderness of heart? Or hardness of heart? One that says, oh man.

I know I've been there. Or more pharisaical. Mmm. Sorry, buddy. John Stott, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.

He defines mercy as compassion for people in need. But if you're a fan of Boston, the band, you know that compassion is more than a feeling.

No. It's compassion in action towards people in need. Mercy isn't just feeling bad for people in need.

It's doing something about it. It's moving towards them. So mercy is compassion in action for people in need. And it requires a tenderness of heart.

[4 : 43] It doesn't mean you look past people's sin or hardships or what people have contributed to their own difficulty. But it does mean tenderly trying to help them in their need.

Do you know what gets in the way of us extending mercy to people in our lives that are in need? Not the people in need. It's us.

We've got a problem in our hearts. If you regularly experience impatience with people in need, frustration with people in need, avoidance of people in need, maybe you are disgusted by people in need.

Maybe there's an unwillingness in you to be inconvenienced to help people in need. Do you know what you need to hear? Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

I'm going to make a case this morning that's aimed at your heart. I'm not going to go into, here are some practical steps of how to help people in need without hurting them.

[6 : 02] There's this very helpful kind of book. It's called Helping Without Hurting. It's how we mercifully and wisely meet people in their needs. I'm not going after that this morning.

What Jesus' words is giving us an opportunity is to tend to our hearts. So here's what I'm going to argue. I want to convince you of it. The tender mercy of God tenderizes our hearts towards those in need.

You need the mercy of God to be merciful to others. I'm going to make this in four points. First is this.

We're going to look at mercy personified, mercy incarnate. Then we're going to look at his mercy people, mercy's pathway, and then the mercy that's promised.

So let's dig in. Mercy personified. Steve opened to the service this morning in Exodus 34, 6 and 7. God reveals himself to Moses, the Lord, the Lord, merciful and gracious.

[7 : 11] The first thing God says about himself to Moses is, hey, I'm merciful. Now he's just and holy and righteous.

I mean, we're going to see in a little bit he's the judge, but he's full of mercy, merciful and gracious. It might make you wonder, what's the difference between mercy and grace?

Both God's mercy and God's grace are ways God expresses his love for people in need. But as I was reading this week and preparing for the sermon, I came across this distinction that I thought was helpful.

I think it will help you. It's not necessarily airtight, but you'll get the point. God's grace is God's loving pardon to people in their sin.

It forgives our sin. It pours out God's wrath on Christ for those who believe and imputes Christ's righteousness on those who believe. It deals with pardon for our sin.

[8 : 16] God's mercy is his loving relief of people in the misery of experiencing sin's effects.

Whether their own sin or the sin of others or being in a fallen world. Mercy is God's compassion in action towards those in need.

I want you to see it in the person of Jesus. When you look at the Gospels, your Gospels are just so full of your merciful King's heart towards those in need.

It's just packed with it. So I picked four passages in which people actually ask Jesus for mercy. I just want you to see how he responds.

In Matthew chapter 10, there are these two blind guys and they cry out to Jesus, have mercy on us, son of David. Son of David is the title of the king.

[9 : 31] I mean, Jesus is Joseph's son, but he's David's greater son, the king. What does Jesus do? He goes into their house, he asks them some questions, and then he opens their eyes.

What's the need? They can't see. What's the mercy? He causes them to see. Mercy. The next example I want you to see is in Matthew 15.

Jesus is now not in Israel, he's in Tyre and Sidon, which is Gentile territory, and he walks into a woman's house and she's a Canaanite woman. And in verse 22, she says, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David.

She acknowledges him as the son of David. And then she says, My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. The need? Her daughter is being oppressed by a demon.

Jesus hears it. And what does Jesus do? He heals the daughter of the demon. Do you know why? Because he's full of mercy. In Matthew 17, there's a guy, he comes up to Jesus, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly, for often he falls in the fire and often into the water.

[10:52] Jesus' disciples couldn't do anything, so Jesus did something about it. He cries out for mercy. The need is his son. This demon is just oppressing him.

And what does Jesus do? He heals him. Matthew 20, two more dudes, blind guys, outside of Jericho.

Lord, have mercy on us, son of David. You picking up on the theme? This king, and what does Jesus do? He sees the need, he has pity, he gives them sight.

Do you know what this means? I mean, we haven't even talked about the woman who has 12 years of bleeding who comes up behind Jesus, touches him, and she's healed. Mercy!

We even even talk about Jesus showing up at a wedding. His mom says, hey, we're short on wine. Jesus! And in his mercy, he makes water into wine. How about that?

[11:57] Our Jesus, the son of David, is full of mercy. Again, and again, and again, people in need come to him, and they cry out for mercy, and he gives it to them.

He's tender. He welcomes the needy. He moves towards the needy. There's his ministry, and then there's his cross.

Theologians talk about the cross as the place where justice and mercy meet. God's just wrath met by God's mercy, giving salvation to all who believe.

You know, it's at the cross of Jesus Christ that he addresses and relieves our greatest need as human beings on the planet to be relieved from sin's penalty and power and one day sin's very presence.

So we see this merciful king being tender in his mercy, in his ministry, two people, and then on the cross, and then there's the throne.

[13:20] Jesus died. He was buried. He was raised, and he ascended into heaven where he's at the right hand of God seated on the throne, and we learn from Hebrews, he, Jesus, is our merciful high priest who can identify and sympathize with us in every way, and he's like, come to the throne of grace, come to the throne of mercy in your need.

Come find mercy. So, brothers and sisters, when you hear these words, blessed are the merciful, people, they're coming from the lips of mercy incarnate, the king who's full of mercy, compassion and action towards those in need, and his ministry on earth, on his cross, and on his throne.

is he begrudging in his mercy? No. He's tender, eager to show mercy. Does that not tenderize your heart?

That, that he would be that way to you and your need? Does that not just, I don't deserve that. Is anyone in the room in need? Material need? Emotional need? Relational need?

[15:11] Spiritual need? Take your cue. Son of David, have mercy on me. He's not going to begrudge you mercy.

mercy. Jesus is mercy personified, mercy incarnate, and we, his people, are a mercy people. So we move from mercy personified to mercy people.

Blessed are the merciful. And let me just remind you of how Jesus frames the Beatitudes. In 5.3, he says this, blessed are the poor in spirit.

Then comes the promise, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now, if you declare spiritual poverty to Jesus, he brings you into the kingdom.

And then in verse 10, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You suffer for Jesus, it's just evidence that you're in the kingdom.

[16:18] kingdom. So, the first and the last of the Beatitudes, this character profile of a citizen of the kingdom, it's now kingdom.

It's being brought into his kingdom now. These mercy people, blessed are the merciful, these are people who have been brought into the kingdom.

kingdom. These are people who have already experienced the mercy of God. They've already been delivered from the domain of darkness and by God's grace and mercy transferred into the kingdom of the beloved son.

Every Christian is to be characterized by all eight of these Beatitudes. It's who we are now that we've been made new, given new hearts, given new desires, given a new purpose.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done. May we show mercy. This people, this merciful people, this blessed people, they've already been shown mercy.

[17 : 42] Listen to how Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 2. And mind you, he's writing to church of Gentiles and Jews. He says, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Do you know why we are to be merciful?

Because we've been received mercy. We've been mercied. Brothers, sister, God has mercifully helped you with your greatest need of all to be reconciled to him, to be rescued from your sin. And because we are a people of God's mercy, we are to show mercy to others because of God's tender mercy towards us, us in need, and we're still needy, so we are to be tender towards others in need.

Now I can imagine someone in the room saying, time out. Whoa, time out, Salvati! We're all busy people.

[19 : 15] There will always be people in need. Is showing mercy really that important?

Would you turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 25? It's one of my favorite sounds in the world right there.

In Matthew 25, 31, Jesus is talking about what happens when he comes back. Listen to what he says, and then be listening for the concrete data point of his judgment at the end of time.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

That's talking about the judgment. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. So all of humanity separated at this point in time, at the throne by Jesus.

[20 : 40] Then the king will say to those on his right, come, you are blessed by my father, blessed by my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Lord. And then it gets personal. For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him saying, whoa, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink?

And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And then the king will answer them, the king of mercy.

Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of these least, one of the least of these my brothers, these sheep on my right, one of the least, one of the most needy and vulnerable as you did to them, you did to me.

[21 : 41] Is it important? It shows up at the judgment. whether you show mercy or not is the stuff, the evidence that demonstrates you've been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved son.

There's no arguing it. It's undeniable proof of conversion. In Matthew 7, this is at the end of the sermon on the mount.

In verse 21, Jesus says something similar. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my father, who is in heaven.

On that day, what we just read, on that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name, and then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

You know what? You know what Jesus is looking for? Mercy, not sacrifice. Mercy, not big shows of spirituality. He's looking for mercy. You showing mercy to people in need, just as he showed you mercy in your need.

[23 : 06] Blessed are the merciful. He has shown us mercy. The tender mercy of God is to tenderize our hearts to those in need.

It is proof positive you're in the kingdom, and if it's not there, the question is, are you in the kingdom? I don't know about you, but this kind of tender mercy, boy, it tenderizes me.

mercy. That's mercy, people. Those who have been shown mercy, they're blessed. But maybe you're sitting in your pew saying, gulp.

I'm not sure if I'm seeing the mercy that Jesus is talking about. Maybe some of you are getting a nervous.

I want to help you right now in talking about mercy's pathway. Because mercy flows down and out from the throne in heaven down to earth and out to people in need.

[24 : 35] there's this flow, but it gets dammed up. There's this principle throughout your Bible. It's a cause and effect principle.

And we see it in a passage like 1 John. 1 John 4. You don't need to turn there. I'll turn there and read it for you. In 1 John 4, we read this.

Listen for the cause and effect. Do you see the cause and effect?

God loves us. We love others. Vertical horizontal. We see it in John 13 in the new commandment. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are to love one another.

And by this, all people will know that you're my disciples. Jesus is the great example and source of our love for one another.

[25 : 40] He loves us. We love one another. Mercy flows along the same route.

Because mercy is actually a demonstration of love. It's an exercise of love to other people, those in need.

So God has mercy on us, and we have mercy towards others. Imagine you are in a, you own a cabin in Colorado, and I'm going to make up the mountain you're next to.

it's called mercy peak. And mercy peak, it's topped, it's capped with snow, it's snow melt, runs down this mountainous stream called mercy stream.

And mercy stream flows into, next to your cabin, mercy lake. It's pristine waters, it's snow melt.

Every morning you drink it up and you drink out of it.

[26 : 51] It just gives you life. And then what you do is you're like, oh this is so good. You get buckets of it and you carry it over to your neighbors so that everybody drinks from mercy lake. And everybody's like, yes, we love the water of mercy lake.

Well one morning you wake up and you walk outside and your mercy lake is a mud puddle. So you pull out your binoculars.

Okay, there's still snow on Mercy Peak. Oh yep, I can, yep, there's some kind of snow run off.

I see it, yep, yep, yep, yep, yep. I'm following it down. Oh, oh, there's a problem. Huh. About 400 yards up there's been this dam of stumps, of brush, of rocks.

There's this sticks, trees, and they have formed this dam and it's blocking Mercy Stream from running. Do you know what you're going to need to do? You're going to get your hiking boots on. You're going to go up there and you're going to dismantle the dam so that mercy flows.

[28 : 09] Do you know where I'm going? If you find yourself impatient, frustrated, avoiding, disgusted, unwilling to be inconvenienced for people in need, you've got a dam on your mercy stream, on God's mercy.

It's in you. It's in your heart. And the way that you dismantle that dam is by confession of the sin, that allows mercy to flow and you need mercy first and foremost for yourself.

You need a drink of that lake. You need mercy. So let me press into that. this dismantling of the dam that backs up mercy to you and to others.

Well, you've got to remove the sticks of impatience. Oh God, forgive me. Son of David, have mercy on me. I see my impatience again. Forgive me.

There's the brush of busyness. business. I was in New York City recently and I love to ride the subway. But the subway would shoot through these like subway stations at 900 miles an hour.

[29 : 37] And you're like looking out the window and you're going so fast, people on the subway station platform are just a blur. For many of us, we're living life so busy, we're flying by people in need.

We've got to dismantle the brush of busyness. We've got to slow down. There's a pile up of the stumps of grudges.

Maybe you've tried to help somebody. Maybe they've bitten you. Maybe they've gotten mad at you. Maybe they're like, I want to be helped this way. And it's like, I'm not putting myself up against that again.

You need mercy. That's backing up the flow. Oh God, have mercy on me for holding a grudge against this person I'm trying to help and they're just not letting me help them the way I want to help

them.

The rocks of the unwillingness to be inconvenienced. Maybe it shows up like this.

[30 : 49] You encounter someone in need and you're like, that's above my pay grade. Pastor! No. You're not above that.

That's not above you. It's not beyond you. Our Lord Jesus wants mercy, not avoidance, engaging people, moving towards people.

There's another area that's a little delicate. Our affluence. Listen to 1 Timothy 6.

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, to think that they're better, to separate themselves, to not be willing to get their hands dirty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, rich in mercy. To be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasures for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

[32 : 14] Yes, even our affluence can be a dam to the flow of God's mercy. Oh, Lord, have mercy on me for seeing, for allowing my wealth to get in the way of helping people in need.

this is what's going to take for us to dismantle these dams.

What it gets at is our ongoing need for mercy. Ironically, there is mercy to help you dismantle your dam.

And then there is mercy that meets you when you are like, oh, this is bad. Mercy! Oh, I don't like this attitude. God, that must agree with you. Mercy!

Mercy, mercy, mercy, mercy me. mercy. I don't know about you, but when I see these things in myself, son of David, have mercy on me.

[33 : 31] Have mercy on me for my merciless heart, for a lack of tenderness towards these people in need.

Could it be, brothers, the reason why there's not more mercy is because of our sin? Brothers and sisters, blessed are the merciful.

Aren't you glad to know God's mercy is more? God, mercy is bigger than my heart. Mercy has a pathway, down and out, and God wants to adjust your heart to use you to extending mercy, bringing buckets of water to people in need.

So now let's look at this mercy promised. This beatitude is broken into two parts. It's like the rest of the beatitudes. There is this character trait, merciful, blessed, it's of God, it's a result of God's grace, and then there's a promise.

And in this case, it's a future promise. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Now that might sound a little confusing to some of you.

[35 : 07] Because it may sound like Jesus is making future mercy conditional on your present mercy shown. It can sound something like this, if you show mercy now, then I will show you mercy then.

it can sound like God will show us future mercy depending on our show of present mercy to others. It sounds conditional. Is it? No. Jesus isn't saying that. If Jesus were saying that, we'd have to throw out our New Testament.

it. Jesus is saying something else. Because salvation, our salvation, is not by works.

Our salvation is not conditioned on our obedience, on our obedient show of mercy. Our salvation depends solely on God's grace and mercy.

[36 : 18] mercy. So, so if it's not that, what is Jesus saying? Well, remember who he's talking to. That these citizens of heaven are people who've already been brought into the kingdom of the beloved son.

Remember, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. That's what bookends this group of people. These people have been shown mercy. These, these blessed ones, they've been shown mercy.

First Peter 2, 9, and 10. These blessed kingdom citizens are being shown mercy. They have a merciful high priest who pours out mercy from his throne.

And they will be shown mercy at the judgment. Do you remember the response of the people on the right hand of Jesus, the king in Matthew 25?

They're like, what? When did we show you mercy, king? all along? When you're showing mercy to the least of these of mine that I paid for?

[37 : 30] Listen up. If you're in the kingdom, the judgment throne is a mercy throne. The judgment throne is a mercy throne.

Jesus is not making a future mercy conditioned on our present obedience. This is future mercy promised to present kingdom citizens, those already who've been brought into the kingdom. And now proof positive of their citizenship is they show mercy, just as their king has shown them mercy. You know what that makes a weekend say? Light of the judgment?

Son of David, you will show mercy to me on that day. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is mercy.

Do I have an amen? Amen? mercy awaits brothers and sisters. And I don't know about you, but that mercy to come tenderizes me to show mercy now.

[38 : 46] Mercy personified. The one speaking this beatitude is mercy incarnate. His ministry is cross his throne.

mercy people. We've been mercied. We've been brought into the kingdom by his mercy. We once were not shown mercy, now we have been shown mercy.

There's this mercy pathway. It flows down and out. And maybe you've got some work this afternoon to confess and dismantle some of the things blocking the flow of mercy to you and others.

Mercy promised. Mercy awaits. We look forward to that day. Now you may be asking this question, maybe you've been asking it all along.

Who do I show mercy to? And I'm going to close by reading another parable of Jesus where he answers that question. said to him, and behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

[39 : 57] He said to him, what is written in the law? How do you read it? And the lawyer answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.

And Jesus said to him, you have answered correctly. Do this and you will live. But he, the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor? Jesus replied, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance, a Jewish priest was going down that road and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side, maybe saying, I need to get to this prayer meeting. So likewise, a Jewish Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

I've got kingdom work to do. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion.

He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he sent him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.

[41 : 21] Jesus then said, Which of these three do you think, Mr. Lawyer, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? And the lawyer said, The one who showed mercy.

And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise. Brothers and sisters, the kingdom of heaven has come. We've been mercied.

Now let's go and do likewise. Let's go with the flow and let's show mercy as those who've been tenderized by the very mercy of God.

And you know what's going to happen? It's going to distinguish us from the rest of the world who is merciless. Let's pray.

God in heaven, we are a people in need of your mercy every day. Forgive us for allowing other things to get in the way of us seeing our need and drinking deep from your flow of mercy to us.

[42 : 34] Oh, we're so grateful that we can come to your throne of mercy and find mercy in time of need. We thank you, Jesus, that you see us as we are. Lord, would you use us?

Would you help us to see people in need with eyes of mercy, tender, helpful, humble, and pray this in Jesus' name?

Amen.