

Blessed Are the Merciful

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Date: 13 March 2016

Preacher: Mike Salvati

[0:00] Something happened. Something happened in room 301 of the Kenosha County Courthouse. This was a few weeks ago, and I was there in support of someone.

But because of the lack of space in the courtroom, I was waiting out in the hall. And so, we got in there right around 9 a.m., and there was this mob of people, about 125, 150 people that had to make an appearance before the magistrate that day.

And as I observed these people waiting to go into the courtroom, I noticed that they were pretty quiet. There was a degree of anxiety. Maybe a little fear.

People not knowing what awaited them as they had to take their stand before the judge. And at one point, the bailiff says, All right, everybody come in. And so, all 125, 150 people kind of moseyed in, and no room for supporters, so I had to stay out in the hall.

Door closed. But over the course of time, what would happen is people would start to trickle out.

People who had come before the judge. And something happened.

[1:19] They were coming out different than when they went in. They had encountered mercy. They were coming out relieved, happy, and giddy, most at least.

They received mercy. Eventually, I was able to take a seat in the courtroom. I want to know what was going on. And what I would witness is the magistrate would call a person by name.

That person would walk up and stand in a very, like a pulpit, kind of thing like this in front of the judge. The judge would then ask them to state their name.

They would state their name. And then the judge would go on to say publicly for all to hear what this person's violation was in the corresponding penalty, which was most often a fine.

And then, the magistrate would ask the accused a very particular question. What do you plea?

[2:27] Over and over and over again. Accused up, name, violation, penalty, what do you plea? And more often than not, depending how the accused answered that question, what do you plea, would determine if they would receive mercy.

What do you plea? For those who had admitted their guilt, the magistrate found a way to reduce the penalty every time.

For those who resisted and contested without warrant, and there was one particular creature who did, there was no mercy. Everyone in the room is a violator.

We've all violated God's law. We all stand accused. And on that day before the great white throne, and it is coming, when we are standing face to face with our judge, the judge of all, the question I want to ask you this morning is, what are you going to plea?

What are you going to plea? Matthew 5, 7, Jesus says this, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

[3:47] Do you want to find mercy on that day? Do you want to stand before the throne of God, before the judge of all, without fearing condemnation, but anticipating mercy? Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

As you read that in Matthew 5, 7, you may be asking yourself a question like this, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. What is Jesus saying here? Because this doesn't sound quite right.

Is Jesus saying that to receive mercy on that day, I must show mercy on this day? For me to receive mercy then, I've got to be showing mercy now?

Is that what He's saying? Because that's starting to move in a direction of kind of a salvation by works. I earn God's mercy by showing mercy.

Is that what He's saying? Because it kind of sounds like it, doesn't it? Well, He's not saying that. Our salvation is by grace alone.

[4:51] Our works of mercy certainly do not earn our salvation. They may evidence our salvation, but they don't earn it. So what's going on in this fifth beatitude?

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Well, here's what I want to help you see this morning. Those who are promised God's mercy in the future have already received God's mercy now.

For those who are going to receive God's mercy then, they've already received God's mercy now. And the way I want to help you see that from this passage is by asking and answering three questions.

The first question is, what is mercy? We'll answer that. We're going to go to another spot in our Bibles to answer that. We're going to look at a parable. And then we're going to ask the question, who are the merciful then of Matthew 5-7?

Who are they? And then, by way of closing, we're going to ask this question. What awaits the merciful?

[6:00] What awaits? So, those who are promised God's mercy then are the ones who experience God's mercy now.

So let's ask this question, what is mercy? Well, this past week, I read some brilliant minds on this passage. And I read some brilliant minds on the relationship between mercy and justice.

Justice is the exacting of a punishment for a wrong done. That's what justice is. What mercy is, is mercy is the relenting of punishment.

It's not giving you what you deserve. And so, we can't think of mercy as existing in a vacuum. Mercy exists because justice exists.

And God is a God of justice. I read other minds on the relationship between mercy and grace.

Mercy and grace both flow from the fountainhead of God's love.

[7:05] God's mercy and God's grace represents God's loving response to sin and its people and its consequences. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, grace is especially associated with men and women in their sins.

Mercy is especially associated with men and women in the misery resulting from their sin. John MacArthur talks about grace dealing with sin itself and mercy attending to the problems that stem from sin.

Mercy deals with symptoms. Grace deals with cause. Mercy offers relief for punishment of sin.

Grace offers pardon for sin. These are all good things.

But perhaps an even better way to answer the question what is mercy is to listen to one of our Lord's parables concerning mercy.

Do you remember the parable of the good Samaritan? Maybe better yet, the merciful Samaritan? Jesus used this parable to teach about mercy, the kind of mercy pleasing to God.

[8:16] So if you want to follow along, I'm going to turn your Bibles to Luke chapter 10. I'm just going to summarize. I'm going to walk through it because I want you to see something pretty.

I want you to see mercy. As you're turning there, I just want to remind you that a parable was a teaching tool.

It teaches, it's a vivid picture to teach a point. And Jesus is using this very vivid story to teach a point.

Well, if you're there in Luke chapter 10, there's a prideful lawyer that tests Jesus. Now, I'm not saying that all lawyers are prideful, but a particular lawyer, a prideful lawyer, tests Jesus with the question, how do I inherit eternal life?

Jesus replies, well, how do you read the law? Lawyer, love God with everything you got and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus says, well, you're on target.

[9:25] You do that and you will live. But the lawyer isn't done testing the Savior and he asks a question like this, and who then is my neighbor? And Jesus takes that question and runs with it.

And so Jesus is going to use this parable now to help us understand mercy, how to love your neighbor. So Jesus starts this parable talking about a Jew who is on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho on a road that was notoriously used by bandits.

And this particular Jew got robbed, beat up, and left for dead. And as it turns out, according to this parable, a Jewish priest who was supposedly very schooled in the law of God, a Jewish priest comes along on the road, sees his countrymen lying there in distress, and what does he do? He walks on by. And then there's another Jewish official that comes, this time a Levite, another kind of Jewish leader in the community.

And that Levite comes upon the same man, sees him in his distress, and what does he do? He passes on the other side.

[10:52] And so these two religious people don't give a rip. Maybe they had a prayer meeting to get to. Maybe they had a Bible study. Then Jesus goes on.

A Samaritan comes by. Now what you need to know about Samaritans is that Jews saw Samaritans as ethnic half-breeds who were in a perpetual state of impurity.

And so, if Jews needed to travel from north to south, they would not go through Samaria. They would go around Samaria. That's what kind of sets up the John 4, Jesus with a Samaritan woman at the well, which is so amazing.

So this particular Samaritan comes upon this Jew and sees the Jew. And unlike the priest and unlike the Levite, the Samaritan has compassion on this man who's been beat up.

This man in distress. And so the Samaritan stops. He binds up this man's wounds. Applies all sorts of healing ointments. Somehow lifts him up on his beast.

[12:03] Brings him to an inn. And takes care of him. And if that weren't enough, he spends two denarii. Which is like \$300 to \$400 our day. Spends that money.

Gives it to the innkeeper and basically says, hey, use this money to help this guy out. If you run over it, put it on my tab. Because I am coming back. And I want to know how he's doing.

So this is, Jesus tells this parable to this lawyer. And Jesus then looks at the lawyer and says, well, you tell me who proved to be the neighbor.

The priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan. And the lawyer says, the one who showed mercy. That Jew didn't deserve any of the Samaritan's kindness, but he showed it.

Jesus says, you go and do likewise. What does it mean to be merciful? What is mercy? Mercy? Well, mercy is to see someone in need and help them.

[13:15] Mercy is compassion in action. Mercy is Christ-like compassion and action. It doesn't ignore justice.

It recognizes justice, but is merciful in the face of it. Mercy is showing kindness and help to people suffering from the fallout of sin. When you hear mercy, think compassion in action.

And to be merciful in a Christ-like fashion is to be burdened for those people who are in distress. We see that in the Good Samaritan. He saw this man and had compassion on him.

He was moved by it. He had space in his heart for this person who was suffering. And then the Samaritan was inconvenienced. He stopped. We don't know what his deal was.

Was he on a business trip? Probably. But he was interrupted. He took the time. Mercy allows for interruptions of plans.

[14:21] And then this Samaritan bore the cost. He dropped quite a bit of jingle to help this guy out. He paid out of his own pocket. This Samaritan was personally involved with this stranger he just found on a road.

He was personally committed. He jumped right in. I mean, he was going to come back. And so when we ask the question what is mercy and we look at the parable of the Good Samaritan we see that mercy flows along lines that go beyond people's appearance go beyond people's backgrounds go.

Mercy is unconditional in its application to people in need. Now what I find most intriguing about the parable of the Good Samaritan is when you start to compare the Good Samaritan to Jesus.

The one who taught the parable. We see in Jesus this burden this compassion Matthew 9 Jesus looked upon them the harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd and had compassion

upon them.

He had space in His heart for those who were suffering the fallout of sin. Jesus was inconvenienced. He left His place in Heaven to show us mercy. He didn't walk around us.

[15:51] He came and He knelt down. Think about it this way. The second person of the Trinity condescended and took on human flesh. He became Emmanuel to meet us in our distress.

He bore the cost. Jesus paid it all. He paid the bill for our sins out of His pocket. He paid for our lives your life my life with His life and He paid with the currency of blood.

He paid it all. He bore the cost. He's personally involved. What we learn from our Bibles is that not only does Jesus save us but then He sticks with us.

What He starts He finishes. He will sanctify us completely. Surely He will do it. He is faithful. He's personally involved.

It doesn't get much more personal than when God in the flesh dies in your place for your sin. It's that personal. So when we ask the question what is mercy you know what we need to do?

[17:13] We need to ask the question no, no, no, no. What is... it's compassion and action. We get it. But it's really who is mercy? Jesus is mercy incarnate.

Jesus is compassion and action. The Good Samaritan was Jesus in disguise. When we think about mercy we think of Jesus. He was compassionate.

He was inconvenienced. He bore the cost. He's personally involved. He's committed to us all the way through. So what is mercy? Mercy? It's compassion and action.

Who is mercy? Jesus. Jesus. And so for us who are to be the merciful we are to be Jesus-like.

Blessed are the merciful. So who is mercy? What is mercy? Compassion and action and we see it clearly in the person of Jesus. Let's move to the second question. Who are the merciful of Matthew 5-7?

[18:12] So we've stepped out of Matthew 5 the Beatitudes to look at mercy in Luke 10. Now we're back in Matthew 5-7. Blessed are the merciful. Who are the merciful?

Now over the last month I have sought to help you see that the Beatitudes are not some kind of random gathering of Jesus' sayings with no particular order.

but in fact Jesus very intentionally arranged them. There was purpose in the order. They build off one another. So if that is true they build off one another.

The Beatitudes inform who the merciful are. There's more to be said of the merciful than just those who show mercy.

The merciful are also the poor in spirit. They've declared spiritual bankruptcy but they've experienced God's mercy in their distress.

[19:21] God bailed them out. They didn't deserve that. The merciful are those who mourn their sin. They have been so distressed over their sin that they can cry out for mercy just like that that tax collector in the parable in Luke 18.

Have mercy on me a sinner. That tax collector wouldn't even lift his eyes to heaven. And God is merciful to those in distress.

They find their comfort mercy in Christ. The merciful are also those who are meek who are humble. Out of God's mercy God shows the meek who they really are in the grand scheme of things.

They're not the center of all things. God is. And so the meek are fully aware and gladly yield to God his rightful place. And God in his mercy deeds them a parcel on the new earth.

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. The merciful are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. To do God's will.

[20:37] To be Christ-like. Does it make any sense? I hope it does that when the spiritually bankrupt are given the kingdom and then when those who mourn are comforted when the meek recognize who they are that their affections that their desires start to now move along with what God's desires are?

They start to hunger and thirst for the things of Christ? Does it make sense then that those who've been changed by God's mercy will now want to show mercy?

That's what we see going on here. The merciful are those who have already received God's mercy. That's what we see from the Beatitudes. They have already experienced God's mercy.

They've already experienced God's blessing. The merciful are citizens of the kingdom. The merciful are Christians who have received mercy themselves.

And so, who are the merciful? Well, if we're understanding the progression of the Beatitudes, right, the merciful are those who have already been shown God's mercy. They're citizens of the kingdom.

[21:51] They've received God's mercy in abundance. But they're also people who show mercy. Having received God's mercy in Christ, the merciful hunger and thirst to show Christ-like mercy.

Here's another way to think about it. Back to the Good Samaritan. If Jesus is the ultimate Good Samaritan, if Jesus is mercy incarnate, if He showed us mercy, we are to be Christ-like in showing mercy to others.

It just makes logical sense. We're made right with God. He shows us mercy. And now, we show mercy to others. We love our neighbors as ourselves.

We're to be good Samaritans Samaritans to those around us in distress. And I don't know where your mind goes to those in distress.

Maybe you think of homeless people. Maybe you think people who come here and are seeking some kind of help. You don't have to go there. It's true. But start thinking just in terms of who's in distress from the fallout of sin under your own roof.

[23:14] Your spouse? Your children? Children, start in your home and work out. Look for the lonely. Look for the isolated. Look for the overwhelmed. The frail.

Those who are experiencing the hardship of sin in their life. Whether it's their own decisions or other people's decisions or systemic sin or the fallout of living under a world that is burdened and groaning because of sin.

If we are to be merciful like Christ then there's going to be some things that will be true of us.

We're going to be burdened for those in distress ourselves. And so our hearts will be compassionate to others in need. So, are you making space in your heart for people in need?

Is there space in your heart for that? Are you willing to go there? Are you willing to open yourself to that? But not only is there need for a space in your heart to be burdened, there's got to be space in your schedule.

[24:32] You're going to be inconvenienced on a daily basis. To show mercy takes time.

It's not going to mesh well with your present daily arrangement usually. I mean, think about it this way. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and he had to go through Jericho and this is at the end of his days.

And he's walking up to Jericho, two blind men start calling out to him, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. They say it again, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus' disciples are like, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, we're on an itinerary here, buddy.

Got to get to Jericho. Sorry, no time. Jesus hears them and he says to them, what can I do for you? What can I do for you? That can wait. You're asking for mercy? I give mercy.

How can I help you? Jesus restores their sight. It wasn't on the agenda though. So for us to be Christ-like in our mercy, we're going to be burdened, we're going to be inconvenienced, we're going to bear cost.

[25:43] It's going to show up in our budget, both personal and church budget. It shows up. Money will be involved in helping those people in need. We've got to make space for mercy.

Many of you right now may be asking the question, well, how does that work? How much do I give? How do we do that?

What do I do when someone comes up and asks me for five bucks? What do I do? I'll come back to that in a second. But we're at a bare cost. It's going to show up in our budgets.

We've got to make space for that. Like Christ, we're going to be personally involved with people.

There's just no substitute. When we come across people in need, there is no substitute for personal relationship with them.

None. No substitute. To pony up next to them, to say, hey, how can I help you? I might not have all the answers, but I can walk with you through it. You've got to make space for that.

[26:50] We see it in Jesus. Having received God's mercy, we now show mercy. We are burdened to inconvenience.

We bear costs. We're personally involved because it's like the Good Samaritan. Because it's like Christ. The merciful are those who have already received God's mercy and are seeking to show God's mercy to others.

Now, if you are not burdened for those who are suffering the fallout of sin, if you're not willing to be inconvenienced, if you're unmerciful with your money, if you're unwilling to get personally involved, the question you need to answer this morning is this.

Have you received God's mercy in Christ? Do you know what He's done for you? Have you experienced His kindness in His mercy?

He came for you. These words of Jesus pose a real challenge to us, don't they? They really get at the self-righteous too.

[28:04] All citizens of the kingdom of heaven show mercy. Do you know why? Because all the citizens of the kingdom of heaven have received mercy.

The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of mercy. And the king of heaven himself is mercy incarnate. Now, I want you to imagine in your mind a line.

We're going to call it the mercy spectrum. And on one end of the line is the word merciful. And on the other end of the line is merciless.

Where do you fall? Think in terms of burden, compassion. Think in terms of inconvenience. Think in terms of bearing the cost.

Think in terms of being personally involved. Where do you fall on the spectrum? Where do you want to move? Where do you fall on the mercy spectrum?

[29:15] We've all got ground to take. Now, you may be asking yourself another question. Where do I start? Where do I start?

Start in your house. Start in your home. Start with your kids. Start with your spouse. Look for opportunities to show mercy to them. To meet them. To help them. To show kindness to them. Not to bring the lumber. Not to put them in their place. You probably already know that. How do you show mercy? Where do you start?

Start with those people immediately around you. That's where you start. They will be experiencing some kind of stress, distress from sin. Now, maybe you need helping, help thinking about how to show mercy.

So, back to the question of, all right, I'm over at, you know, common grounds. Some person comes up to me and asks for five bucks. What do I do? What do I do?

[30:18] Well, there's a couple things I want to help you with. If you go online, if you Google the words helping without hurting, it's going to bring you to a video series.

It is outstanding. So, helping without hurting, it's put out by the Chalmers Center. It's based out of St. Louis. And, those six videos will give you a very helpful introduction to wise mercy.

how to respond in those kind of moments where you feel put on the spot. So, go there. Another option is this book, Same People When Helping Hurts.

This is another outstanding resource. I've got three copies of this and I'd be glad to hand them out to anybody who would like one at the end of the service. So, you want help in showing mercy?

People have gone before us and have done some very careful thinking about it. Who are the merciful?

[31:22] Those who have been shown God's mercy and who are seeking to show God's mercy. Compassion and action. I want to close with this question.

What awaits the merciful? What awaits the merciful? In Matthew 5-7 we read, Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.

Brothers and sisters, God has already shown His mercy to you in Christ. You didn't get what you deserved. He paid it all. And He continues to show His mercy to you and He will show His mercy to you on that particular day, that great and final day of judgment.

We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But you have nothing to fear. For your judge is also mercy incarnate.

The one who sits upon the throne has already been burdened for you. The one who sits upon the throne He's already been inconvenienced for you.

[32:42] The one who sits upon the throne already bore the cost for you. The one who sits upon the throne has been personally involved with you from the beginning. He's the one who sits upon the throne.

Mercy incarnate sits upon the throne. Jesus sits upon the throne. And so if He were to ask you on that day, what do you plead?

If you were to ask me, Michael, what do you plead? There's only one word that will come to your mind. And only one word will come off your lips and it will be with a whisper.

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, you are my only plea. You are my only plea. the only hope I have before this throne is you.

What awaits the merciful? More mercy. What awaits the merciful? Mercy incarnate. We fear not.

[33:50] If you were to ask, what do you plea? And we say, Jesus, He says, enter the joy of your master. What awaits the mercy?

The merciful? Mercy. Those who are promised God's mercy in the future have already received God's mercy in the present.

And so, we show mercy to all because Jesus is mercy incarnate. Let's pray. God in heaven, we are in constant need of mercy.

mercy. And we want to be merciful. God, would you do the work in us? Would you make us merciful?

Thank you for the promise which lies ahead that we have a merciful judge waiting for us. God, we rest in that, knowing that we bear His righteousness.

[34:53] In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.