

# Giving and Receiving Mercy

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Date: 17 March 2024

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- [ 0 : 00 ]     Good morning again. Scripture reading for this morning is taken from two passages, Psalm 103, verses 1-14.
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- And all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.
- Who forgives all your iniquity. Who heals all your diseases. Who redeems your life from the pit.
- Who crowns you with his steadfast love and mercy. Who satisfies you with good. So that your youth is renewed like the eagles.
- [ 1 : 07 ]     The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses. His acts to the people of Israel.
- The Lord is merciful and gracious. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- He will not always chide. Nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins.
- Nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth. So great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him.
- As far as the east is from the west. So far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children.
- [ 2 : 15 ]     So the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.
- And in Matthew chapter 5 verses 1 through 7. 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.
- [ 3 : 18 ]     For they shall receive mercy. Thank you very much, Faye. This morning as we continue our sermon series in the Sermon on the Mount.
- We come to one of the more difficult Beatitudes. The fifth one. Blessed are the merciful. For they shall receive mercy.
- This Beatitude is difficult to understand. Because even though it's about mercy. Some people assume that it's about grace.
- And they interchange grace and mercy. They interchange them as the same thing. And so they make this Beatitude. Though it's about mercy. About grace.

And this Beatitude is also difficult to understand. Because some people approach it in a legalistic manner. They believe that we earn God's mercy. By giving others mercy.

[ 4 : 22 ] But is this what Jesus taught in this Beatitude? But I think you would agree with me this morning that the primary reason that this Beatitude is difficult is not because it's not easily understood.

I think the reason this is difficult is because I think you would all agree that it's hard to live out.

You and I find it far more easier to receive mercy than to give mercy. We will take mercy every moment of every day.

But you and I know that we find ourselves at times very challenged to give the same mercy to others that has brought us comfort. And this morning, by God's grace, I want us to engage this Beatitude.

And I want us to consider whether Jesus teaches that this is a sowing and reaping Beatitude. And I want us to consider why it is that we find it so hard to give mercy when we find it so easy to receive mercy.

[ 5 : 50 ] Let's pray. Father, we bow our hearts this morning, acknowledging that we need to hear from you.

And so, Lord, we pray. We pray that you would do for us what we just sang, that you would speak. That you would speak from your word to our hearts.

We pray that you would speak and build your church through the preaching of your word. Lord, I thank you this morning that you know where each one of us is and you know what each one of us needs.

And so would you meet us wherever we are this morning. And speak to our hearts for the glory of your name.

Amen. This fifth Beatitude is really about two things. First, it's about giving mercy. And that's what is meant by the words, blessed are the merciful.

[ 6 : 58 ] To be merciful is to give mercy. And so we could say, blessed are those who give mercy. But as I've already alluded to, this word mercy is so easily misunderstood.

So exactly what is mercy? Deceased pastor and theologian John Starr simply but helpfully defined mercy this way. He said, mercy is compassion for people in need.

And since compassion is feeling or showing concern for others, mercy is feeling or showing concern for people in need.

Another deceased theologian and pastor, David Martin Lloyd-Jones, he goes a step further. He defines mercy a little bit more broadly.

And he says, mercy is both having a sense of pity and a desire to relieve the suffering. So it's having a sense of pity, having a sense of compassion in our hearts.

[ 8 : 15 ] But also, it is a desire to relieve the suffering that we see. And so mercy is more than just being emotionally moved in our hearts over the needs of others.

Instead, it is having a sense of pity on them and a desire to help to relieve the suffering. Now that we have defined mercy, I think it's important now for us to distinguish between mercy and grace.

And again, I lean on some dead theologians for this. Theologian Richard Lensky distinguishes mercy from grace by considering their meanings from their Greek words.

Here's what he wrote. The noun, Elias, mercy, always deals with what we see of pain, misery, and distress, the results of sin.

And charis, grace, always deals with the sin and guilt itself. The one extends relief, the other pardon.

[ 9 : 24 ] The one cures, helps, heals, and helps. The other cleanses and reinstates. Another theologian distinguished mercy and grace by saying that grace is especially associated with men in their sins.

And mercy is especially associated with men in their misery. I think it's very helpful to think about those two distinctions between grace and mercy.

Grace is associated with men in their sins. And mercy is especially associated with men in their misery.

So now that we have defined mercy and we have distinguished mercy from grace, I want us to consider two very important questions.

And they are, who are the merciful? And how did they become merciful? Who are the merciful? How did they become merciful? Who are the merciful?

[ 10 : 36 ] Well, the merciful that Jesus describes in this fifth beatitude, they're the same ones that he has identified in the rest of the beatitudes. The same people.

He's not talking about a different group of people. He's not suggesting that possibly there can be some people who have mercy, they're very merciful, and then there are others who may, for example, as we heard last week, they hunger and thirst for righteousness.

No, throughout the beatitudes, Jesus is talking about the same people. Those who are merciful are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

They are those who are meek. They are those who mourn over their sin. They are those who are poor in spirit, who recognize that they are bankrupt before God and they offer nothing to him of spiritual value.

Those who are merciful are the same people about whom the rest of the beatitudes are true. And how did they become merciful?

[ 11 : 39 ] Or to put it another way, how did the fifth beatitude become true of anyone? How does this become true of anyone?

The answer is the same way the rest of the beatitudes became true of anyone. And as we've been saying repeatedly throughout this Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes are not true for those who possess them through birth or possess them through gifting or who possess them through personality or who possess them through disposition.

Instead, the people whom Jesus calls merciful, the people of whom the beatitudes are true, they've been born of God.

Something happened to them. Something out of this world happened to them. They were begotten from above. They were regenerated by the Spirit of God. And when they were regenerated by the Spirit of God, they became new creations in Christ.

And they were endowed with a heart, a new spirit, that God himself gave them. In 2 Corinthians 5, 17, the Apostle Paul writes, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

[ 13 : 06 ] The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. And one of the resulting realities of the new birth and becoming a new creation in Christ is that we are transformed to the very core of our being.

We become spiritually alive. And part of being spiritually alive is that we become awakened to who we really are before God, that we are poor spiritually, that we have nothing.

In the words of the song, nothing in my hands I bring, but simply to your cross I cling. When God awakens us, when he regenerates us, we see our sin.

And sins that gave us pleasure begin to bring us grief. And we mourn over our sin and we grieve over our sin. And when we are born again, we become meek, where we find that we don't need to make our own way.

We don't need to fight to get the long end of the stick. We can entrust it to God. And he promises that those who are meek, he will cause them to inherit the earth.

[ 14 : 20 ] We hunger and thirst after righteousness. As we heard so well last week, it is not blessed are the righteous, it is blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

They recognize, I don't have the righteousness I desire to have. And certainly not the righteousness God wants me to have. And so we hunger and thirst after righteousness.

But that's only because God did something in our hearts and lives. Had he not done that, we would not hunger and thirst after righteousness. There are so many people walking around and living life on this Sunday morning and they have no desire whatsoever for anything righteous.

And here we are this morning, those of us who have been born again. And we know that we are not all that God has called us to be. But there is a desire in our heart to love God more and serve God more.

We hunger after righteousness because of what God has done in our hearts. And brothers and sisters, it is the same for those who are merciful.

[ 15 : 34 ] We're only merciful. We only have any desire of mercy in our hearts because God has given us new birth in Christ.

And this is very important to grasp that this mercy that we are considering this morning is divine mercy.

This is not human mercy. Yes, we are humans who give this mercy, but the mercy itself is not human mercy.

When the Spirit of God moves upon our hearts and we see people in need, when we see people in their sin and the results of their sin, we don't judge them, we don't condemn them, we pity them.

We want to help them. And that's not of human origin. That is of divine origin.

[ 16 : 43 ] It is God's mercy in our hearts that moves us towards those in need. This is mercy that originated from God.

The merciful are those who first receive mercy from God. And this is true of every believer. The first experience of mercy that any of us who have come to Christ have experienced is divine mercy.

We receive mercy from God in salvation, but we receive grace and mercy. We receive grace and mercy in salvation. God's grace comes to us because of our sin, and he addresses our sin in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But he also gives us mercy because he relieves us from the misery and the distress and the pain that sin has brought into our lives.

And so we who have received divine mercy from God in salvation are called to show that same mercy to others in life. And how and why can we give this same mercy?

[ 17 : 56 ] Why can we show this mercy to others? Because of the new birth that transforms our hearts and our lives. And as a result, all of us who name the name of Jesus Christ are to be merciful people, meaning we have received mercy from God and we give mercy to others.

The world is filled with many people, some of whom don't believe in God, some of whom outrightly reject God and hate God.

And they give of their time and they give of their money to feeding the poor and clothing the poor and housing the homeless and educating those who are needy.

And friends, that's not divine mercy. Those who are truly merciful must first be a recipient of divine mercy in salvation.

But grace and mercy are not confined just to salvation. And thank God it isn't. Grace and mercy is not just confined to the mercy and grace that God gave us when we came to Christ.

[ 19 : 15 ] We need ongoing mercy. We need not only that initial mercy, but we need this ongoing mercy from God. Because we continue to sin.

Though we have come to Christ, we stumble and we fall in many different ways and we need his grace to forgive our sins. We also need his mercy to rescue us from the effect of our sins, to cure us and to heal us and to relieve us.

And the writer to the Hebrews reminds us of this in Hebrews 4, 16, when he writes, let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

He's writing this to people who are believers, people who had already come to God and who experiences grace and mercy and salvation. But we need grace and mercy in an ongoing way.

And so we are told to come with confidence to the throne of grace that we might receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. And so I want to ask you this morning, are you merciful?

[ 20 : 33 ] Are you among the ones whom Jesus refers to as the blessed? The ones whom Jesus refers to as merciful.

And if you are, to whatever degree you have any mercy in your heart, it is because you've been born again and the mercy that you show to others is God's mercy that he has shown to you in Christ.

And if you're not merciful, then it is because you have not known the mercy of God. But the good news is you can know the mercy of God.

You can know God through repentance and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus says that whoever comes to him, he will never turn away.

He will receive them without exception. But the reality is that even though those of us this morning who would acknowledge that there is mercy in our hearts, I think we would also acknowledge that none of us is perfectly merciful.

[ 21 : 53 ] None of us. But if we truly belong to Christ, merciful must be a true description of us. Not a perfect description. But it must be sufficiently true of us that we are merciful.

Brothers and sisters, it would be an indictment on the gospel, an indictment on the salvation that God brings, that he can come into the heart of someone and leave them as a merciless person.

And I understand sanctification. I understand that we grow over time. But friends, if Christ comes into our hearts, he transforms it. And we must, as a result, have mercy.

We must be truly marked by this description, he or she is merciful. And I encourage us today, there are people who know us, we live with them, our spouses and our children, we work with them, our co-workers, we were raised with them, our brothers and sisters, we live with them in community, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

It would be a helpful conversation to have, to ask, do you see me as a merciful person? And that's an opportunity to be encouraged, that's an opportunity to grow.

[ 23 : 30 ] And we should ask, do you see me as a merciful person? Encourage us to have that conversation because we can grow in sanctification wherever we find ourselves on the spectrum of being merciful.

This brings me to the second aspect of this beatitude. First, it's about giving mercy, but secondly, it is about receiving mercy.

The second part of this beatitude is they shall receive mercy. The first part, blessed are the merciful, those who give mercy, they shall receive mercy.

Now, we've already established that those who give mercy to others in life are those who have received mercy from God in Christ. Christ. And so, this promise of receiving mercy here in this fifth beatitude is what we might call ongoing mercy.

Not initial mercy, but ongoing mercy. Now, as I mentioned, some people think that what this beatitude is about is that it's sowing mercy and reaping mercy.

[ 24 : 59 ] I submit to you that that is not what this beatitude is about and I hope that you are happy with me that this beatitude is not about that. Thank God this is not about sowing and reaping mercy because if that were the case, I think we would all be doomed.

And let me try to explain why this fifth beatitude is not about sowing and reaping mercy. The first thing is when we think of it, whose mercy is in view?

Or to ask it another way, whose mercy is it that the merciful receive? Is it the mercy of others? Kind of like, you know, you sow mercy to other people, you get mercy from other people.

Or is it perhaps mercy from other people and from God? Or is it mercy from God? Which of those three? Mercy from others, mercy from others and God, or is it mercy from God?

If we say that this mercy that the merciful receive is either from people or from people and God, what we will do is we will make this beatitude very different from all the other beatitudes.

[ 26 : 21 ] the promise of all the beatitudes is something God promises to give and he gives. He gives the kingdom of heaven to those who are poor in spirit.

He gives those who mourn over their sin comfort. He causes the meek to inherit the earth. He satisfies those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

In the coming weeks, we're going to hear that he reveals himself to those who are pure in heart and he allows the peacemakers to become sons of God, to be called sons of God.

And then he ends the eighth beatitude the same way he began the first beatitude and he says that those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

And so it would be rather odd if all the other beatitudes, the promise is what God gives, but when we come to this one, the promise is what people give.

[ 27 : 28 ] And so I want to submit that this promise of mercy is mercy from God and not mercy from people in terms of you sow mercy and so you get mercy from them.

And the other reason I would say this is mercy from God is when we look at the structure of all the beatitudes, all the beatitudes are condition and promise, condition and promise, condition and promise, and it would be very odd if when we come to this beatitude, this fifth one, that all of a sudden it becomes about sowing and reaping.

so how then are we to understand this fifth beatitude? I believe what this fifth beatitude says is this, God's people are merciful, so they give mercy.

And they receive mercy because they need mercy, not because they give mercy. God's people are merciful and therefore they give mercy to others.

And God's people receive mercy from him because they need mercy from him, not because they give mercy to others. us. And we belong to Christ this morning, need mercy from God in an ongoing way.

[ 29 : 09 ] And we should never for a split second think and entertain the thought that God will withhold mercy from us. If God did not withhold mercy from us, when we deserve to have mercy with help from us, when we were rebellious, when we were away from God, when we were his enemies, he showed us mercy.

And now that we are his own, will he withhold mercy from us? You saw in Psalm 103, as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities us, pities those who fear him.

The psalmist tells us, God does not deal with us according to what our sins deserve and thank God that he doesn't. If he did, we'd all be destroyed. And if God only gave us mercy because we gave mercy, most of us are not merciful enough to be alive.

We need far more mercy than we give. And if God did tit for tat with us, if God dealt with us according to what our sins deserve, we would never survive.

And we need his mercy every single day. And thank God that he doesn't deal with us according to what our sins deserve, because you would admit and I would admit that we don't give mercy enough.

[ 30 : 47 ] We give mercy far more, far less, than we should, and far less than we actually need.

Because we've been reconciled to Christ, because we belong to Christ, he pities us. And this is true even when we fail to show mercy to others.

God sometimes will give us mercy when we don't deserve mercy, to teach us mercy, and to remind us to be merciful to others.

He does not deal with us according to what our sins deserve. Are you not sure about that? He never deals with us according to what our sins deserve. Not once has he ever done that. If he does that once, we can't trust him to never do it again.

But he never does that. the Bible says it is the kindness of the Lord that brings us to repentance and his mercy is an expression of his kindness.

[ 32 : 06 ] We belong to Christ, are truly merciful, even though we're not always merciful. and not always being merciful does not make us unmerciful.

We are merciful because we belong to God and we grow in grace and mercy over time. But in this beatitude, the unmerciful are excluded.

We shouldn't read this beatitude backwards and say, well, blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. So the unmerciful are not blessed and that's not in the beatitude.

The unmerciful are excluded from this beatitude. They don't know God and therefore they cannot show mercy.

And again, I say to us this morning, friends, if there's no mercy in your heart for others, if you're not moved by the need of others, the plight of others that you're able to relieve, then you should rightly question whether you belong to God.

[ 33 : 28 ] If there's no willingness to do whatever you can to relieve the pain and the misery of those whom the Lord providentially brings our way, whatever degree we can, then we lack evidence that we belong to the God who is merciful.

Being children of God means we have his DNA in us. It means that we exhibit his nature, not perfectly like him, but sufficiently to show that we belong to him.

we are merciful and we show mercy to others for one reason, because our hearts have been transformed by the Holy Spirit through the gospel that has come to us.

And this is why the merciful are blessed. Anyone who finds himself in this blessed condition, this condition of being moved in your heart in mercy that is divine, it means that something wonderful has happened to you.

That itself is a blessing. Blessed are those who are merciful because God has acted upon them. God has enabled them and caused them to be merciful.

[ 34 : 54 ] He's been kind to them in initial salvation. He's been kind to them in life. And this again is what the writer to the Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 4, 16, we can come with confidence and draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in a time of need.

The best teaching on mercy is the teaching that Jesus gave. Luke records it in Luke chapter 10. It's the parable of the Good Samaritan.

I encourage you to read it. It's a teaching about mercy and it helps us to see how sometimes we withhold mercy for all kinds of different reasons.

Religion could cause us to not be merciful. Prejudices can cause us to not be merciful. People. The man who was wounded on the road was undoubtedly a Jew.

And that's why Jesus used the Samaritan as the example of mercy. And he was moved and he inconvenienced himself as it were and he expended himself and his resources to help this man.

[ 36 : 17 ] The best teaching on mercy that we have in scripture. But the best example of mercy is God himself.

The best example of putting mercy on display is God himself. God created the world with abundant goodness, created Adam and Eve and placed them in a garden paradise and called them to serve him and to love him and gave them one prohibition, one thing that they should not do.

He said, you can eat of all the trees, but of this one tree in the middle of the garden, you aren't to eat a bit. And Adam and Eve rebelled and they disobeyed God and they fell into sin.

And they didn't come looking for God, they hid from God. And God in mercy went and sought them out. God in mercy took off the temporary garments they had and clothed them with something more permanent.

And God in mercy promised that the seed of the woman one day will come and crush the head of the serpent. And it was a merciful and gracious promise that he gave.

[ 37 : 40 ] It was gracious in that Christ came and in his coming and living and dying he dealt with our sin. and it was merciful because in his dying Christ also rescued fallen men and women from their pitiable and broken state as a result of sin.

mercy on the mercy on the mercy on the mercy on the vacuum. It's not monopoly mercy. The mercy that we receive is earned mercy.

the mercy that we receive is that Jesus Christ when he was on the cross when he was agonizing in misery bearing the sins of sinners and bearing the punishment for those sins he cried out to God for mercy and God gave him no mercy.

God gave him no mercy so he can give us mercy. Christ on the cross took our place and he took our punishment and when he cried out, Father, why have you forsaken me?

God forsook him because he was taking our place and God treated him the way our sins deserve to be treated and God withheld mercy from him so that he could give mercy to us.

[ 39 : 15 ] It's not in a vacuum. It's not because God is just great and wonderful. No, it is because he purchased it with the death of his own son and so when he gives us mercy, it is just mercy.



It is earned mercy. He gave us that mercy initially in salvation. He gives that mercy ongoingly in life.

Brothers and sisters, I know of no better way to be reminded of our need to give mercy than to be reminded of the mercy that we've received.

To think about what God has done to us and giving mercy to us through Jesus Christ, we cannot meditate upon that. We cannot think upon that and not be moved to be merciful to others.

Let us recall again and again the mercy that has transformed our lives, the mercy that has made all the difference for us, lifted us out of our pitiable and miserable condition.

[ 40 : 39 ] And may we seek to extend that mercy to others. It's divine mercy. It's outside of ourselves. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for mercy and grace that has come to us through Jesus Christ.

Thank you for mercy and grace that has transformed our hearts and lives and given us the ability, the capacity to be moved with divine mercy to those in need.

Lord, we thank you that you do not deal with us according to what our sins deserve. We thank you that though we initially did not deserve mercy, though we at times in life do not deserve mercy, Lord, you are merciful all the same.

I pray you help it to be true of all of us who name the name of Christ that in an ongoing way we are merciful.

[ 42 : 05 ] God, would you work in every heart this morning. Would you do it for your glory? In Jesus' name, amen.