

## Happy are the Helpful

Matthew 5:7-8

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for May 31, 2020

Stephen Davey

He was born in 1897 in a tiny farming community in western Pennsylvania. One night as a teenager – 17 years of age, while walking home from his job at a tire store, he overheard a street preacher say: “If you don't know how to be saved . . . just call on God.”

When he got home, he climbed into the attic and called out to God for salvation.

Five years after his conversion, he took his first pastorate in West Virginia. Without any formal training, although he would be an incredible student of the word and teacher of Christian principles, he entered the ministry.

That began 40 faithful years, authoring numerous books, pastoring several churches, receiving 2 honorary doctorates, leading as editor a national magazine, producing countless articles with a pen that was laced with a touch of sarcasm, a good measure of wit and a load of spiritual insight.

His name was Aiden Wilson Tozer, better known as A.W. Tozer.

His books, *The Knowledge of the Holy* and *The Pursuit of God* are now considered across denominational lines to be Christian classics.

Though loved by many, he stood for the truth of the gospel. In fact, in an era where liberalism had swept into the mainline church in the early 1900's Tozer wrote, “We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise – it is an ultimatum.”

More than anything, A.W. Tozer had the ability to challenge the believer to dig into the word of God.

He wrote, “We must not select a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian.”

He compared the Bible to a wristwatch and with a touch of sarcasm wrote, “If God gives you a watch, you don't honor

Him by constantly asking Him what time it is; you honor him by consulting the watch He gave you.”

I’ve read his little book several times entitled, *The Knowledge of the Holy* – for those of you who’ve read his books, you know that even though his most favorite books centered on theology, Tozer had an unusual ability to challenge the Christian that believing the truth was not enough – in fact, it was dangerous unless we lived it and obeyed it.



How do you respond to Tozer’s view that believing the truth was not enough – in fact, it is dangerous unless we live it and obeyed it? How can obeyed truth be dangerous?

He once reminded an audience of this when he said, “The Devil is a better theologian than any of us, yet he remains the Devil.”

He knows a lot about God – but he will never obey God.

On one occasion, as A.W. Tozer preached on the Beatitudes we’ve been covering together in our Sunday Live sessions.

Tozer made the comment that if you turned these Beatitudes inside out – or

upside down – they would reflect the way the average person thinks today.

And he said that 60 years ago. But it’s still true, isn’t it? What would make the average person happy? How do you define happiness?

I took Tozer’s suggestion and turned the beatitudes we’ve already studied and turned them inside out – and look at the difference between what our world says will make you happy, with what Jesus Christ is saying.

## The Inside Out Beatitudes

### Matthew 5:3

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*

The world:

*Happy are those who can say, “I’ve got it made!”*

The Lord:

*Happy are those who recognize they haven’t got a chance.*

### Matthew 5:4

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

The world:

*Happy are those who never have to cry about anything.*

The Lord:

*Happy are those who never stop crying over sin.*

### **Matthew 5:5**

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

The world:

*Happy are those who know how to climb the ladder.*

The Lord:

*Happy are those who voluntarily come in last.*

### **Matthew 5:6**

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

The world:

*Happy are those who stuff themselves with the things of life.*

The Lord:

*Happy are those who are starving for something beyond this life.*

## **Happy are the Helpful**

Today, we're looking at verse 7:

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (Matthew 5:7)*

Before we find out what Christ is saying, we need to understand what He isn't saying.

**Jesus Christ is not saying, 'if you show people mercy, they're gonna show you mercy in return.'**

If that were so, the most merciful man to ever walk the planet would have been given mercy by the mob instead of a rugged cross.<sup>1</sup>

David showed mercy on two occasions to King Saul.

Twice, David could have taken the life of this cruel, vindictive King who threw spears at him trying to pin him to the wall and who, for years, tried to hunt David down and kill him so he wouldn't take the throne of Israel.

On one occasion, in the middle of the night, while Saul and his men were sleeping in the open, David crept up and cut a piece from Saul's cloak when he could have cut Saul's throat.

David showed mercy and Saul only grew more vindictive.

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from John MacArthur, Kingdom Living Here and Now (Moody Press, 1980), p. 105

It's possible to show mercy to people who turn their back on you – reject you – treat you badly.

So, the Lord is not saying, “If you show mercy to others, you’ll receive mercy in return.”



Is there a time when you extended mercy to someone and it was not reciprocated? How did you process that at the time? How do you think about it now in light of the example of Jesus and David?

**Jesus is not saying “If you show people mercy, you’ll earn mercy from God.”**

We do not earn mercy by extending mercy.<sup>2</sup>

Salvation from God is not merited.

However, salvation from God is received. Receiving mercy from God is our present tense experience and our future tense experience.

Paul told Titus that “Christ saved us . . . according to His mercy (Titus 3:5).

---

<sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Live Like a King* (Moody press, 1976), p. 105

In Ephesians 2:4, Paul writes that God has saved us, “being rich in mercy.”

In other words, it's impossible to be saved without experiencing the mercy of God, and salvation is an unmerited gift of mercy and grace from God.

Here's what's happening. This beatitude has more to do with our relationship with other people than with God.

I believe you could understand the Lord to be saying – “Since you as a believer have received the mercy of God, prove it now by showing mercy to other people.”

In other words, showing mercy to others is not a condition to receiving mercy from God, it is proof that we have.

Showing mercy is evidence that we have received mercy.<sup>3</sup>



Have you ever thought about the fact that one of the distinctives of a Christian is that they're willing to demonstrate mercy? Why is that such an important characteristic?

---

<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Crossway Books, 2001), p. 48

This is the thought behind the Apostle John who asked the Christian this question:

*But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him – (closes His tender mercy on him) – how does God's love abide in him? (1 John 3:17)*

We don't earn the love of God. But how can we claim to have the love of God and be unloving and unmerciful to others at the same time?

**Jesus is saying, "You want to be truly happy? Show mercy to others."**

You need to understand that the world of Christ did not admire mercy. The Romans admired justice, power, might. The philosophers of Christ's day even called mercy a, "disease of the soul." It was something to be ashamed of if you expected to be successful.<sup>4</sup>

While in India several years ago I was moved by the masses of people everywhere who were from the lowest caste in their Hindu culture. And appropriately, they were called – the Untouchables. Children ran after us wherever we went offering cheap plastic necklaces for pennies; women begged on the street corners as we drove by, carrying babies on their hips,

their eyes filled with unspeakable difficulty and sorrow.

But no mercy from anyone in sight. They weren't to be touched! Why? Well, Hinduism teaches that these people had reincarnated as Untouchables because of a prior life of evil.

So they were essentially getting what they deserved from the gods. And if you tried to help them, you were essentially getting in the way of their just punishment.

Imagine the reversal of the gospel.



**Where have you seen this reversal of the gospel in our culture? Where does our culture tend to ignore mercy?**

We believe that God is merciful. He actually doesn't give us what we deserve – and that's called mercy – because if we got what we deserved, none of us would ever enjoy one breath of air or one drop of water.

But the gospel doesn't hide from the fact of sin's penalty.

There can be no true mercy apart from justice – I mean, somebody's gotta pay the price for sin. And Jesus did.

---

<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, p. 95

On that cross, the Lord Jesus paid the penalty for every sin we ever did or will do – every thought – every act – every omission – every motive – the apostle Peter said, He bore our sins on His body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). He canceled our record of that stood against us with its legal demand, nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

We've been given mercy . . . but it was immensely costly.

**The redeemed who've been given mercy – they are distinctly fragrant in the mercy they give to others.**

While in India, I met a Christian worker, a woman who was going among the people, inviting elementary aged girls from the Untouchable Caste to her school – these girls especially are without much of a future – and no one cares to educate them . . . why educate some wicked person who has reincarnated in the form of an untouchable poverty stricken little girl?

But along comes believers like this woman – she was the wife of a Christian leader in the community. She would invite these girls to her school, provide for them a clean uniforms and then teach them in the only place large enough and free enough to use – a in a public bathroom she had cleaned, she sat them in tidy rows on the scrubbed clean floor and there she held school for them every week day . . . giving Untouchables hope . . . why?

Because she has been shown mercy?

**Mercy is always demonstrated physically.**

Another wrote it this way, “Mercy is giving attention to those in misery.”<sup>5</sup>



Have you considered that truth before?  
What are the implications for Christians  
when we realize that mercy is always  
demonstrated physically?

The world's not interested in doing that. In Christ's day, and in ours, happiness is having people bow to your needs. Jesus says, “supreme happiness is when we stoop to the needs of others.”

The world would say, “When you are in control – when you have people at your mercy – that's really living.”

By that standard, Joseph had it made! In Genesis 42 his brothers had come to Egypt in need of food and now they were bowed before his authority, not knowing it was their youngest brother they'd sold into slavery.

Joseph now had them at his mercy . . . but he showed them mercy.

---

<sup>5</sup> Hughes, p. 46

This is undeniable proof of God's mercy having impacted his own heart, long before.

**You want true happiness? Show mercy.**

You want to be truly unhappy? Be stingy with people. Let everybody know that those people over there or down the street are getting what they deserve. Show no mercy.

While you're at it, you might study the life of Joseph Stalin. This Russian premier and one of the most powerful men on the planet had millions of people at his mercy. And he showed none. Millions of people were executed by his order.

He had seven bedrooms. Each of them would be closed at night as tightly as a safe and he would spend each night in a different bedroom for fear of being assassinated. He feared that those he led with a steel boot might show him the same mercy. He even employed a servant full time to do nothing more than monitor and protect his teabags.

Now there's a happy man for you . . . he's on top of the world!

The truth is his servant who watched the tea bags probably enjoyed his tea more than Stalin ever could.

Solomon wrote,

*"The merciful man ultimately does himself good, but the cruel man only hurts himself."*  
(Proverbs 11:17)

There is mercy in forgiveness. There is mercy when you withhold what someone deserves. When you refuse to get revenge – even when that person is at your mercy and you can hurt them, or humiliate them, or ignore them.

---

## Your Turn

Mercy is the imitation of Christ, who in His mercy saved us.

The hymn writer put it this way:



*By God's word at last my sin I learned; Then I trembled at the law I'd spurned,  
Till my guilty soul imploring turned, to Calvary.*

*Mercy there was great and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me;  
There my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary.*

You have received mercy. To whom do you need to show mercy today?

---

Access the complete archive of Stephen Davey's teaching ministry at  
**wisdomonline.org** or on the **Wisdom for the Heart app**.  
You can listen, watch (when available) and read Stephen's manuscripts.