

Matthew 5:7 The 'Be' Attitudes "Blessed Are the Merciful"

9.13.15

Isaiah 26:3

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

Turn in your Bibles this morning to Matthew, chapter 5.

We continue in our series: The BE-Attitudes, as Jesus taught the attitudes that can bring true, divine happiness and joy to the human heart. These BE-Attitudes are part of Jesus' message we call "The Sermon on the Mount." Look at verse 7.

Matthew 5:7

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

As with the other Be-Attitudes...this is such a straight-forward sentence. You might wonder, "How in the world can you get an entire message out of one sentence?" Well, that's the beauty of the Word of God. This one sentence is so rich, that it could literally take 5 messages to mine all the treasures found here, but we'll seek to do so in one message this morning.

Let's look at what it means to be merciful. The Greek word for "merciful" only appears twice in the N.T. It appears here and in Hebrews 2:17. And guess who Hebrews 2:17 is about? Jesus.

Hebrews 2:17

17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest and He knows all about mercy because He humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross.

Now it's important for us to understand what mercy is and what it's not. Mercy is NOT just sympathy alone. Mercy goes beyond sympathy to action. In other words, you see a person in need and you are moved to the point of action. So, it can be said this way:

Mercy is compassion in action to a person who stands in need.

What was Jesus saying to those first-century followers on that mountainside? Simply this: "The people in my kingdom aren't takers, they're givers! The people in my kingdom aren't condemners, they are mercy givers. The people in my kingdom aren't ones who set themselves above everybody, they're the people who stoop down to help everybody."

Why did He say these things? Because He knew was talking to people who believed they could be righteous and good by what they do. That's what they've been taught. You see, there were Pharisees and Sadducces and Scribes and Synagogue Rulers in that crowd who were self-righteous and pompous and most of them would never stoop to help anyone for any reason whatsoever. It was beneath them to be merciful.

Jesus was teaching that what matters is what's on the inside. If you get the inside right, it will take care of the outside. If the heart attitude is right, it will lead a person to be merciful. In fact, if you look at the entire Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, you'll see that Jesus lays out what needs to happen in the heart in chapter 5 and then shows us the right actions in chapters 6 and 7.

I love how Martyn Lloyd-Jones described what Jesus was teaching. He said:

“A Christian IS something before he DOES something. To be a child of the King, to be a subject of the Kingdom is, first of all, to possess a certain character. A character of brokenness, a character of mourning over sin, a character of meekness, a character of hunger and thirst for righteousness, a character of mercifulness, a character of purity of heart, a character of a peacemaker.” Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, British Pastor and Doctor, 1899-1981

And you see this is the journey we've been on for the past two months as we've studied the words of Jesus in these BE-Attitudes. The point Jesus is trying to get across to the crowd is this. Jesus didn't want them to try to control certain external activities; He wanted them to know that if they would receive Him that it would be Him who would control us and direct us and lead us.

We don't control our lives. He does. The principles that Jesus was teaching were to be found on the inside and that would strip away the mask, the veneer, the façade of religion.

Listen, knowing Jesus and following Him is something that happens to us at the very center of our being and then He controls the very heart of our being and from there will flow out of us the characteristics of a changed life. God has never been interested in superficiality. He's not interested in the masks that we wear to make ourselves look good to everyone else. He's not even interested in your being here today if you are just going through some meaningless spiritual ritual like the Pharisees.

I love the words of God as penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the prophet Amos:

Amos 5:21-24

21 "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. 22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. 23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. 24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

God wants our hearts folks! He doesn't want empty (going through the motions) worship. We can come in here and sing songs and on the outside...praise His name and then walk out of here and tomorrow cuss a blue streak or treat people like dirt at work or school. Oh that's so misguided and so dishonoring to God. Listen to me...God is concerned with our motives, the HEART of our actions and the real you and the real me. What does He see this morning? Does He have your heart? Have you made that journey down that Jesus was talking about?

You see these BE-Attitudes are inner connected. The first four are the inner attitudes and the last four are the outer manifestations of those attitudes.

Connection of the “BE-Attitudes”

Poor in Spirit leads us to be: **Merciful**

Mourning over our sin leads us to be: **Pure in Heart**

Meekness leads us to be a: **Peacemaker**

Hunger & Thirst -Righteousness makes us willing to be: **Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake**

We’re going down... Remember...



And once we go down, we arrive to the place of humility, which will make us a merciful person. And Jesus said...

Matthew 5:7

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

So what does it mean to be merciful? Well, the concept of mercy runs from one end of Scripture to the other. From God’s mercy toward Adam and Eve in providing for them a covering for their sin...to Jesus who showed mercy for us on the cross...to the mercy of God to restore and make all things new with a New Heaven and a New Earth shows His mercy from Genesis to Revelation.

Turn in your Bibles to Luke 10. Luke records the account of the Good Samaritan as told by Jesus. Jesus was addressing a lawyer who was trying to trap Him and Jesus said...

Luke 10:30-37

30 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. **31** Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. **32** So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. **34** He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** 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.’ **36** Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” **37** He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

Mercy is compassion in action. But please, please don’t mistake mercy for grace. They’re not the same thing. You see, mercy offers relief from punishment. But grace offers pardon from a crime. Grace comes first and removes the sin and then mercy comes and eliminates the punishment. Mercy eliminates the pain and grace grants a better condition. You see the Samaritan came and...



...he showed mercy to the man to relieve his pain. Mercy poured oil in his wounds and mercy bound up his broken bones and relieved his suffering. But, it was grace that went and rented the room in the inn so he’d have a place to stay.

You see, mercy deals with the negative and grace puts it all in the positive. Mercy takes away the pain and grace gives a better condition.

Get this...this is so rich... When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead...Mercy said no hell, grace said yes to heaven. Mercy says I pity you, grace says I pardon you. And Jesus offers both.

Now understand this about that audience Jesus was talking to on that mountainside. They've never been shown mercy by anyone. Their Jewish leaders...the Pharisees and Sadducees, never showed mercy to them...the common people... No they were treated like lesser citizens and scum by their own religious leaders... And consider the Romans...



The Romans showed no mercy to the nation of Israel ever. They exacted tremendously egregious taxes that were so high and so unfair that the people could barely eek out a living. So, to hear these words from Jesus to be merciful was a jolt to their system of thinking.

But understand who's talking about mercy. It's Jesus Christ, the merciful One! But think about it... Was He shown mercy? No sir! He was not shown mercy by the Pharisees...



They not only rejected Him as the Messiah, but they would send Him to the Romans who would show no mercy either...



Pilate, the Roman Governor, would order Him to be crucified.

You see, some people try to translate this BE-Attitude (Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy) and say, **"If you'll show mercy, mercy will be shown to you."** Well, that's true sometimes (it is true that we reap what we sow), but sometimes we show mercy and it's returned with hate, anger and wickedness.

Think about it... Jesus Christ came into the world and was the most merciful human being that ever lived. Jesus Christ came into the world and never did anything to harm anybody. Never!! Jesus Christ came into the world and...

- He reached out His hand to the sick and He healed them.
- He reached out to the crippled and He gave them legs to walk.
- He reached out to the eyes of the blind and they saw.

- To the ears of the deaf and they heard.
 - To the mouths of the dumb and they spoke.
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Listen, Jesus reached out in mercy to the prostitutes and the tax collectors and those that were considered the worst of the worst and He drew them into the circle of His love and He set them on their feet. He picked up the sorrowing, He wept with them, and He took the lonely and He made them feel like they were loved. He took little children and He gathered them into His arms and He blessed them. Never was there a human being who ever lived on the face of this earth who showed the mercy of Jesus Christ. And yet no mercy was shown to Him!

Oh there are so many accounts of His mercy in the Gospels. Dr. Luke records in Luke 7 how Jesus once was going along the streets of a town called Nain, and a funeral procession came by, and He saw a mother weeping because her only son was dead. Jesus stopped the processional and looked on the woman who was a widow (she had no husband and now no son) and Jesus had mercy on her... Luke records...

Luke 7:13-15

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."
14 Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."
15 And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

Take a look at the face of the artist's depiction of that mother...



That's what mercy does... Mercy indeed!!!

Jesus ate with tax collectors, showing them mercy. He ate with sinners, and when the scribes of the Pharisees saw Him eat with them in Mark 2, they said:

Mark 2:16-18

16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

From start to finish, Jesus embodied mercy. But, mercy was not returned to Him. He was the most merciful human being that ever lived and yet, they screamed for His blood and they beat Him mercilessly...



and then nailed Him to a cross!

No sir...if mercy carried its own reward, they wouldn't have nailed the most merciful human being

that ever lived to a cross and spit in His face and curse Him while He hung there totally innocent. The most merciful one who ever lived received from the people He came to save no mercy at all. And yet, that's why it's called mercy. You don't deserve it but get it anyway! And who gives the mercy? **God!** Look at it...

Matthew 5:7

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

God is the subject of that second phrase. God is the one who blesses. Remember... All the blessings that we're discussing comes from God. He is the Bestower of blessings. The blessings don't come from you, or from your circumstances or from other...no...they come from God! God is the one who will give you mercy, when you show mercy!

And how did God show mercy?

Titus 3:4-6

4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own **mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, **6** whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

1 Peter 2:10

10 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**.

Church family, knowing all of this...how can we not show mercy when we've been blessed and given so much mercy?

Matthew Henry said:

"We must have compassion on the souls of others and help them; pity the ignorant and instruct them; help the careless and warn them; reach out our hands to those in a state of sin and snatch them from the flames of Hell." Matthew Henry, Bible Commentator (1662-1714)

Who needs you to show them mercy today? Will you extend it to them?

If you are here today and you are truly saved, God has shown you in His loving kindness the greatest mercy of all, by saving you...a wretched sinner...because you confessed and repented of your sins...calling on the wonderful name of Jesus. May we now go and offer that same mercy to others. Having compassion in action to those who stand in need.