



MERCY
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are continuing our study called **Different Than Last Time**. We are walking through the most counterintuitive statements of all time: **The Beatitudes**. They are not the philosophy for a good life – they are the values of this new Kingdom Jesus is bringing. They come at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ most famous teaching, and each Beatitude begins with the word “**BLESSED**” (happy or fortunate). Here we see the portrait of a Christian disciple pleasing to God and we are challenged by the words and wisdom of Jesus. This week we are studying the Beatitude that is so powerful it has the potential to change the way we live our daily lives with mercy.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are those who are merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.

Matthew 18:21-35 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. At this the servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” The servant’s master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.” But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” In his anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

OBSERVATION

In Jesus’ time the rule for how many times they must forgive another was four. When Peter asked Jesus if seven times were sufficient. When Jesus said 77 times, He literally blew the lid off the discussion. There was to be no limit in His Kingdom. The Hebrew word for mercy as used here is **CHECED**. It is the ability to get right inside the other person’s skin to see things with their eyes, think things with their minds and feel things with their feelings. This parable of the ungrateful servant makes us wonder how he could have responded with

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

forgiveness toward the man who had wronged him if he had been able to do this. Instead, he forgot the magnitude of his own debt when it came time for him to forgive another.

QUESTION: When have you been able to put aside your resistance to forgiving another and been able to see the circumstances through his eyes?

APPLICATION

Jesus is reminding us of the huge debt we owe Him: forgiveness of our sin. He not only died for our sin as He gave all of Himself for us, He continues forgive and respond with grace and mercy to our continued failures. All He asks is that we show the same mercy to others. When we do that it doesn't mean only to sympathize with a person and it doesn't mean to feel sorry for someone who's in trouble. It is much more than an emotional wave of pity. **CHECED** takes a lot of effort and intentionality to get inside the other person's skin – to identify with exactly what he could be going through. Most of us are so concerned with our own feelings that we are not much concerned with the feelings of anyone else.

QUESTION: What is the difference between mercy and grace?

To get to Jesus' level of mercy we must be honest about a few things: **1) We need to transition** from wanting to be right to wanting to extend mercy. The enemy of mercy is wanting to be right and this can often overshadow our ability to have mercy for another person, especially if they have done wrong because of their own decision making, addiction, or environmental difficulties. If our response is, "I told you so or I told you this would happen," then we can right ourselves out of a relationship – we can right ourselves out of being merciful. **2) Victim mentality** is rooted in past trauma, betrayal, and co-dependence (they've given up and sacrificed themselves for the sake of another person's issues and happiness.) Victim mode can lead someone to continue blaming others for their situation and problems – never taking responsibility. If we are in the victim mentality mode we are not looking for solutions because we think, "Why should I fix something when we are not the ones who put ourselves in the situation. Someone else did that. We are frustrated and angry with a world that seems to be against us. We feel hopeless about our circumstances and are resentful of people who seem happy and successful. If we live in a victim mentality mode in our stories, we will be unable to show mercy because we are convinced that we are right! **3) Don't play the victim.** People who are forgiving, willing to change, to say "sorry, and are humble are more open to receive mercy. Those who are prideful and never say they are wrong, go into victim mentality.

QUESTION: Where are you in transitioning from self into mercy?

QUESTION: If you are stuck in the victim mentality mode, what is holding you there?

QUESTION: In what area are you determined to be right even though you may lose a relationship over it?

What is amazing is that collectively we have become victims of 2020. At one point or another we all have a victim mentality mindset as a result. But it is possible to approach this year differently than we did last year. If we are able to take responsibility, take action on our problems and allow ourselves to become open to a better way of feeling and seeing ourselves and others -- that's where mercy can show up. Our heavenly Father is saying to us, "I know it was hard. I know you got hurt. I'm here with you to be healthy, to be more mindful of others than yourselves. You've got this!"

QUESTION: How are you reacting to these words from your heavenly Father?

Finally, merciful people must have imagination. In order to be merciful we must put ourselves in other people's skin and wear their moccasins. Our ability to pause and imagine before we react and respond, will be the turning point for those who strive to be merciful. J. K. Rowling wrote, "Unlike any other creature on this planet, human beings can learn and understand without having experienced it. They can think themselves into other people's places."

QUESTION: Jesus created incredible moments for people to pause and imagine what mercy is like. Describe several of those moments in His ministry.

QUESTION: Write down someone's name that you wish would extend to you mercy, sympathy, and empathy. Imagine the steps you would want them to make in order to right the wrong in that relationship or in your life.

Bryan Stevenson² wrote: “There is a strength, a power even, in understanding brokenness, because embracing our brokenness creates a need and desire for mercy, and perhaps a corresponding need to show mercy. When you experience mercy, you learn things that are hard to learn otherwise. You see things you can’t otherwise see; you hear things you can’t otherwise hear. You begin to recognize the humanity that resides in each of us.”

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to be obedient and merciful with hearts so full of love for You that we see everyone around us through Your eyes and in Your image. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: When have you been able to put aside your resistance to forgiving another and been able to see the circumstances through his eyes?

QUESTION: What is the difference between mercy and grace?

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² Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption