



Sermon Text: Matthew 5:7

Sermon Date: June 2, 2019

As Christians we love mercy. We know how desperately we need it. We are happy to get it, but often half-hearted in giving it. Our text on Sunday challenged us to see the absurdity of being a merciless recipient of mercy. We walked through our verse in four stages.

A TERM TO DEFINE

Occasionally we incorporate words into our vocabulary without having a clear understanding of what they actually mean. One of those words is mercy. What is mercy? Wayne Grudem defines mercy as “*God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress.*” While grace primarily deals with guilt, mercy focuses on misery. Mercy isn’t simply the feeling of compassion, but the action of compassion. One of the clearest illustrations of mercy is Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10). The Samaritan not only feels compassion, but acts compassionately toward the man who fell among thieves. This story shows that mercy is costly, inconvenient and uncomfortable. Plus, Jesus provides no categories for who should and shouldn’t receive mercy. Citizens of Christ’s kingdom are called to show mercy to everyone.

AN ERROR TO AVOID

Is Jesus teaching that receiving mercy from God depends upon showing mercy to others? Is mercy a work to perform, a reward to earn. This cannot be the case. The Bible clearly teaches that we are justified, not because of our works, but because of faith alone in Christ alone and his work. Jesus isn’t implying that showing mercy earns God’s mercy. Instead, Jesus is teaching that showing mercy is the necessary result of receiving God’s mercy. To receive mercy and to show mercy are indissolubly connected. So that if one is missing, it is striking evidence that the other is also gone.

A WARNING TO HEED

Being merciful is a clear sign of receiving God’s mercy. And the inverse of that statement is also true: Not being merciful is a startling sign of not receiving God’s mercy. In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18), Jesus makes that point. It is utterly absurd to receive staggering mercy and forgiveness and then withhold mercy and forgiveness from others. Jesus crafts the story in such a way that unforgiveness seems unthinkable. And it is! To receive God’s forgiveness must invariably result in showing forgiveness to others. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments, “*What makes me merciful is the grace of God. But the grace of God does make me merciful. So it comes to this. If I am not merciful there is only one explanation: I have never understood the grace and mercy of God; I am outside Christ; I am yet in my sins, and I am unforgiven.*”

A WAY TO FOLLOW

How then do we live lives defined by mercy—costly, inconvenient, uncomfortable mercy? The way forward is always to go back to the beginning of the Beatitudes. To get to verse 7, you must enter through the gate of verse 3. The life of the Beatitudes is impossible without the logic of the Beatitudes.

- **Look in:** The first three Beatitudes call us to look in and come to grips with our spiritual bankruptcy, mourn it, and become meek in the aftermath of it. Empty people are merciful people.
- **Look up:** After seeing that we are starving for righteousness, we look up to Christ for all the righteousness we need. And by grace, we are satisfied. Satisfied people are merciful people.
- **Look out:** Only after looking in and looking up are we then able to look out on others with mercy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from Sunday?
2. What makes a lifestyle of mercy so difficult?
3. Why is it impossible to live mercifully if we turn giving mercy into the means of getting mercy?
4. Why must every beatitude be read in the context of all the beatitudes?