

WEEKLY STUDY GUIDE

Study guide for the week of July 19th

As we continue our sermon series entitled “Beatitudes: The Pursuit of Happiness,” we come to week 5 where we address our fifth Beatitude from Matthew 5:7 (NRSV) “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.” The word “beatitude” means blessed, fortunate, enviable, possessing the favor of God, and spiritually prosperous. It is transcendent happiness. **What has impacted you the most in this current study? How is it helping you in your daily life?** As we continue to reflect on Jesus’ teaching from the Sermon on the Mount, we to find a common theme throughout: humility. We see that pursuing a happy life means caring for others through empathy and compassion.

Matthew 5:7 says, “Blessed are the merciful.” Mercy means to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need. The general meaning is to have compassion or empathy for those who are in an unhappy circumstance. It is also an active desire to help others in their time of need. Mercy is when we don’t get what we deserve.

Josh gave an example of what mercy looks like. He was once pulled over by a police man without wearing a seatbelt, while rolling through a stop sign, with his license plate cover illegally placed over his license plate. The ticket was going to be over \$400. The officer let him drive away with a warning. The point of this story is not how bad of a driver our Lead Pastor is, but that the officer showed mercy. Do you know who said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy”? That’s right, Jesus. Jesus did more for Josh than get him out of a \$400 ticket! We were all sinners in need and Jesus showed kindness, empathy and compassion to us. He had an active desire to remove our guilt and shame by putting it on Himself. Happy are those who show mercy because they will receive mercy! **How about you? When have you been shown Mercy? How did it make you feel?**

+ **Mercy is at the heart of who God is.**

Deuteronomy 4:27–31 (NLT) “For the Lord will scatter you among the nations, where only a few of you will survive. 28 There, in a foreign land, you will worship idols made from wood and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. 29 But from there you will search again for the Lord your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him. 30 “In the distant future, when you are suffering all these things, you will finally return to the Lord your God and listen to what he tells you. 31 For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the solemn covenant he made with your ancestors.” Go back and read this scripture! Hear what it is saying today! You have not been abandoned! You have not been destroyed! You have not been forgotten! Our God is a MERCIFUL GOD! Yes, even in the Old Testament He was a merciful God. He cannot change. He is a God of Mercy! We can search for God and listen to what He says to us. Have you received mercy (kindness, compassion, help) from God? If you answered yes, and I know you did, then our response is to be merciful people! **In what ways have you seen the mercy of God in your life?**

Proverbs 14:21 (NKJV) “He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.” Happy are the merciful! Do you want to be happy? Do you want to pursue happiness? If so, pursue mercy! Instead of judging others, be kind, be compassionate, and have mercy. Have mercy on the poor. Not just the financially poor but the spiritually and emotionally poor as well. **How can we, in this country of divisiveness, show kindness to those in great spiritual, emotional, and financial need?**

James 2:13 (NLT) "There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you." This scripture is a black and white truth in a gray world. We can see our beatitude in this scripture, *"if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you."* We also see an anti-beatitude (just go with it) in this scripture, *"There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others."* **Do you want to follow the beatitude or the anti-beatitude? Since you chose the beatitude, how can you show kindness, empathy and compassion today?**

Luke 6:36 (NLT) "You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate." This scripture contains a word that we don't like to hear. That word is must. In other words, this is a command and not a suggestion. Jesus didn't say should or can, but must! Follow your Leader! Mercy is at the heart of who God is. Your Father God is compassionate, full of mercy. We too MUST be compassionate and full of mercy. **We are commanded to be compassionate and show mercy. Does this cause you to pause and think about the way you think and act? Take some time to ask for forgiveness if you have not been showing mercy.**

+ Mercy goes beyond kindness, compassion and empathy. It is also an active desire to help others in their time of need.

Example #1 of an active desire to help others in their time of need: Read Matthew 18:21–35 in its entirety and write down a few things that stick out to you in this parable.

This parable starts out because of the question, "How often should I forgive someone?" Jesus basically said as many times as it takes! So what does this story have to do with us? Let's say that the king in this story is God and the person who owed a very large sum of money is us. God forgives us of a debt that we could not pay. Our sin, for example, was a debt we could not pay. He saw our need and He had a desire to help us by taking away our sin, guilt, and shame. So he forgave us completely! Then we go through life and we come across someone who has sinned against us. Maybe they owe us an apology, money, respect, forgiveness, love, etc. Instead of showing kindness, empathy, and compassion like God showed us, we get even. We show "no mercy" and we let the world know how awful they are. The King hears about it, calls us evil, and punishes us. Here's the kicker in verse 35, "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart." If we do not show mercy and forgiveness, we will be given the same treatment. Mercy is an active desire to help others in their time of need. Period. We have been forgiven of so many things, let's forgive others. Let's extend mercy so that we can be shown mercy!

Example #2 of an active desire to help others in their time of need: Read Matthew 25:31–46 in its entirety and write down a few things that stick out to you in these scriptures.

Are you a sheep or a goat? **Do you offer help to the poor (financially, emotionally, or spiritually) or do you ignore them? What can you do differently moving forward to help others in need?** It is your decision that determines your destiny!

Remember to be merciful and to walk in humility. You have been forgiven, remember to forgive others. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."