Blessed Are The Merciful

**Matthew 5:7**

*Pastor Paul Anthes*

**Introduction:** What goes around … comes around! Coming full circle! Sow to the wind…reap the whirlwind! The Chickens have come home to roost! Karma! Are all idioms used to describe what happens or might happen when we do something mean, uncaring or malicious to others. People seem to actually like to see a criminal or an awful person “get some of their own medicine” or their “comeuppance!” Sadly, humanity and most believers seldom stop to consider this principle before they do something or say something harsh, hurtful, embarrassing or just plain cruel to someone else.

This principle has its origins in God’s evaluation of life and happiness found in The Sermon on the Mount and The Beatitudes in particular. The seven beatitudes are not …. I repeat …. They are not the formula for, or the road to, salvation. If you understand them this way you will run from them like the plague because they start with destitution, mourning and meekness! Will you ever be poor enough in spirit to be saved? We can’t even imagine how mourning and grieving can help us be comforted and who among us could ever hunger and thirst enough for righteousness? No…if this is the formula for salvation we all know deep down that we are never going to attain it.

“Do not fall into the mistake of supposing that the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount set forth how we are to be saved, or you may cause your soul to stumble. You will find the fullest light upon the matter of how to be saved in other parts of our Lord’s teaching, but here He talks about the question, “Who are the saved?” or, ”What are the marks of a work of grace in the soul?” Who should know the saved as well as the Savior does? The shepherd is the best one to discern his own sheep, and the Lord Himself alone infallibly knows those who are His.” ***C. H. Spurgeon***

Jesus begins His description of His own children with the word “blessed.” It means happy, content, satisfied. “The blessed are poor in spirit” not “the poor in spirit will be blessed.” The lost will never ever believe they are spiritually destitute. It goes against our human nature. Only God teaches us that we cannot make amends for our sin. We cannot balance sin with good works or religion.

**Rom. 3:20-24** …. by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Each description of Christ’s redeemed child (beatitude) arises from the one before it. Taken as a whole they describe God’s process of transforming His beloved children and fitting them for the Kingdom of Heaven. Why do the spiritually poor mourn? Because they are poor (destitute) in spirit. The meek or gentle believer has learned of and embraced his spiritual poverty, mourned the loss of all his own righteousness and religion and is now ready to trust God with his or her human life as well as their eternal soul.

The first four beatitudes describe our response to God. God shows us we have no righteousness apart from what He gives us. We briefly grieve that we ever thought we did. We begin to trust God with our life because we realize how He has loved us … we become meek or gentle in the world. This knowledge produces a deep and abiding hunger and thirst to know Him more. A thirst, BTW that God will always satisfy.

**Jn. 6:35** Jesus said to them (some of the 5,000 He just fed), "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

The fifth beatitude is a turning point. Until now Jesus is describing the things that go on in the hearts and minds of His blessed, loved and redeemed children. And then…suddenly….there is that turning point where God begins to transform His Children into the image of Christ. He uses our life and its circumstances to accomplish that.

**Rom. 8:28-30** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

These verses do NOT teach that everything always goes our way. They mean that everything that happens in our lives is for God’s stated purpose of making us Christlike. Christlikeness is God’s predetermined destiny for you. The next 3 beatitudes reveal what that transformation looks like in your life. You can use them to evaluate where you are on the road to your ultimate destiny. They are intended to incite you to be like Jesus. To show you what Christlikeness looks like in your personal life. The sooner you understand what He is doing and embrace it the sooner you will be blessed, happy, joyful, content and satisfied with the life God has given to you.

**Matt. 5:7** "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Mercy, Pity and Compassion are closely related. Christ personified all three while on earth. Jesus was full of Mercy which is why he was always showing compassion.

**Matt. 9:36** Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

**Matt. 15:32** And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and

I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way."

There is no compassion without mercy. Jesus said that mercy was a weighty provision of the law. That, it is a vital priority. Religion can never take its place.

**Matt. 23:23** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.)

The religious leaders in Israel did not show mercy. It takes humility to show mercy and they were proud and arrogant. They would only do it if it was first shown to them. Jesus confronted them about this very thing later in this sermon.

**Matt. 5:43-44** "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

**Matt. 5:46-48** "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Many in the world believe this very thing and live by it. I have lost track of how many men have told me that they would love their wives if they would just be the agreeable and submissive woman they wanted. Or the wives who say they would stop annoying their husbands with deliberate provocations if he would just be the loving man they wanted.

Others teach that if people will see us be merciful then they will be merciful to us.

“As a platitude applied among men, the principle does not work … Neither Scripture nor experience bears out that idea. God works that way, but the world does not. With God there is always proper reciprocation, and with interest. If we honor God, He will honor us; if we show mercy to others especially to His children, He will show even more abundant mercy to us. But that is not the world way!” ***John MacArthur Jr.***

Jesus healed the sick, not because they deserved it but because they were suffering and hopeless and He had mercy. Can you imagine receiving such grace as a blind man or a hopeless invalid.

Jesus went and found the worst of society to care for. Prostitutes, thieves, drunks and society’s outcasts. On one occasion the religiously and mercilessly proud and hateful dragged a woman caught in the act of adultery into the temple courtyard and made her sit in the middle of the crowd that was gathered there to hear Jesus.

**Jn. 8:4-6** they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

Jesus ignored them and their question. They had no mercy for her and they imagined that Jesus would. After all, they had seen Him in action. He didn’t seem offended by any sinner. He healed without qualifications and was constantly having mercy and showing compassion. They would really discredit Him now in front of the crowds.

**Jn. 8:7-9** But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him *be the* first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they *began* to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center *of the court*.

These accusers all knew each other. They knew of one another’s crass conversations about women and their dishonesty in business. They had lied to one another and been found out. They all had dishonored their parents at some point or coveted one another’s wealth or wives. They had to continually bring a sacrifice to this very temple as a reminder of their own sinful, wicked and heartless hearts.

**Hebrews 10:1-4** For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Jesus embarrassed the accusers into silence, but that did not make them merciful. They were not showing mercy by walking away. They were just busted in their own hearts.

**Jn. 8:10-11** Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

In another place Jesus warns all men by describing a professing believer without mercy:

**Lk. 18:10-14** "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

It is God who promises to show mercy. Mankind has none to show. Jesus does not just overlook the sin of adultery here because He knew He was about to make a provision for it. In mercy, He would soon take the punishment that the merciless so wanted to inflict on her.

**2 Cor. 5:21** He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

 “From now on sin no more” is a delightful insight into Christ’s intentions for His children.

**Eph. 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

**Rom. 12:2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

**Jn. 15:16**  "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

Love motivated mercy is not found in religion. It is not part of this fallen world. In fact, one Roman philosopher called it “the disease of the soul.” It was and still is the supreme sign of weakness in most of the world and rapidly becoming so in America too. But Jesus was full of mercy and He had mercy on you.

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Let’s be clear here about our spiritual state before God. Men are without mercy just as they are destitute of righteousness. Natural (unsaved) men absolutely do not know their true condition until God reveals it to them. This is what Paul was doing in Ephesians when he wrote under inspiration:

**Eph. 2:4-7** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

It was His mercy coupled with His great love that brought you to see that you are spiritually destitute, hopeless and helpless before The Judge of Creation. He did this by making you alive to Christ. To behold Him for the first time as He truly is. Not a doctrine to be believed, but a Savior willing to die in your place and to make you a child of God for eternity. A great love! A rich mercy! An extraordinary grace!

Mercy comes from love but love is more than mercy because love exists even when there is no sin or brokenness. The Father loves the son and vice versa and there is nothing to overlook and no wrong to be remedied.

“Mercy is the physician; love is the friend. Mercy acts because of need; love acts because of affection, whether there is need or not. Mercy is reserved for times of trouble; love is constant. There can be no true mercy apart from love, but there can be true love apart from mercy.” ***John MacArthur Jr.***

Mercy is the source of all true forgiveness. The merciful forgive because they have been forgiven. It is impossible to forgive an offence if one has never been forgiven himself. When people tell me they absolutely cannot forgive someone they are saying that they have never experienced the mercy of being forgiven. There are few things in this life more blessed than to be forgiven for an offence or a sin. God forgives you because He is merciful. He is merciful because He is loving. Blessed are the merciful. They have been forgiven great sin and are able to forgive others in return.

**Tit. 3:5** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

There was a certain governor of Georgia, in John Wesley’s day, who was intent on having his servant beaten for drinking his wine. Wesley asked that the man be forgiven and shown mercy, to which the governor replied, “It is no use, Mr. Wesley; you know , sir I never forgive.” “Well, then, sir,” said Wesley, “I hope you know that you will never be forgiven, or else I hope that you have never sinned.”

“When Jesus says, Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”, it is no isolated remark. It flows both from the fourth beatitude, (describing our hunger and thirst) and the first (describing our spiritual poverty). When Jesus blesses the poor in spirit, he promotes mercy, for the poor in spirit are merciful. When we recognize our spiritual poverty, our weakness and sin, we see the weakness and sin of others differently. If we are poor in spirit, we come to understand our own failings and develop a certain patience with them. As a result, we learn to be tender, empathetic, patient, and compassionate with the failings of others. Then we no longer condescend, asking, “What’s wrong with him?” or “How could she ever do that?” We know that we do (or have done) the same thing. When we see a troubled friend, we empathize. We ask, “How can I help?” not “How did he ever get into that ridiculous situation?” ***Daniel Doriani***

**CONCLUSION:** Love drivenmercy is not the normal human response to others. The Pharisees had none whatsoever. They considered sinfulness and poverty a sign of God’s anger and judgment. But, it is not God who reduces men to these levels. It is sin and Satan that causes the misery and unbelief of people you know and love. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He was merciful to you. He could have left you in your sin and been perfectly just for doing so. But you are blessed. Showing mercy is the hallmark of those who have received mercy. Ponder this. What you have received you may give away. There is an endless fountain, opened wide in the heart of God’s chosen ones.

Please do not forfeit these promised blessings. If you cherish the love, mercy and forgiveness God has given to you then purpose to give it to others. To your spouse, your children, your parents, your neighbors and your brothers and sisters in Christ. Christ’s mercy can be given to any who are dead in their sins. The addicted and the self-righteous are both trapped by sin and spiritual death. This principle of Jesus applies to more than just money when He said…

**Lk. 6:38** "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure-- pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

And what child of God would not wish to love Christ more? Who would miss a chance to feed Jesus if He needed food or give Him warm clothing on a winter night?

**Matt. 25:34-40** "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? 38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least *of them*, you did it to Me.'

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