

Music Prayer Matt. 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy"

The first four Beatitudes set a standard for the attitudes of Christian believers. They are a call to moral and ethical living for a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The standards of these beatitudes cannot be met in our own power. God knows we could never live up to these standards without him. He doesn't expect us to, he's also not going to help if we won't ask.

This goes against the culture of the world now and in the time of Jesus. It is a contrast between Jesus' ethical teachings and the Jewish legalistic traditions. Godly wisdom declares the outcome of two ways "way of the righteous" and "way of the sinner" **Psalm 1:1-6.** (*Read aloud*) To have God's blessedness we are to read God's Word and take it to heart **Rev.1:3.** "Blessed is the one who reads the words..., " blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it,..."

Today we are going to talk about mercy. Mercy is an action in a relationship. If we are practicing the first four beatitudes, we will naturally become more merciful. Why is that?

If we admit our need for God, (B1), mourn our sin, recognize our brokenness and lift it up to the Lord for forgiveness (B2) are humbled before God, living under the control of the Spirit (B3) and seeking to be righteous in every relationship (B4) then we can be empowered to extend to others the mercy Christ has extended to us. **Titus 3:3-6** "At one time we were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior"

How do we define mercy? Mercy is not getting what you deserve. It is mercy to be forgiven and to forgive. *God can forgive our confessed sin and forget them.* "...as far as the east is from the west", "he remembers your sins no more" **Is 43:25** But *we cannot do that as humans.* You can pull the nail out of the hole but the hole remains. There are a lot of misconceptions concerning forgiveness as it relates to our humanity. Read the forward in June Hunt's book "Forgiveness". Handout "What Is Forgiveness Not?" pp12-13 Also it is not "tolerating".

Pardon: What does it mean to pardon? To forgive is to pardon. *To refuse to punish even though you have every right to.* Seeking to reestablish a relationship with them that takes into account what was done. To avoid setting yourself up for it to happen again. David appeals to God in His mercy to grant pardon to David following his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. **Ps 51:1-14 Read aloud.** Grace is getting what you don't deserve. Mercy is not getting what you do deserve.

Why should we be merciful? a) stop your personal cycle of pain: every time you hold a grudge, you also hold onto the pain of the initial hurt. The only way to stop the cycle of pain is to forgive b) Pardon to receive mercy: It's not that God isn't willing to forgive us if we don't forgive others, but rather that we are not positioned to receive his mercy without being merciful to others.

c) Pardon to break the circle of revenge: If I hurt you in response to you hurting me, it creates a cycle that can only be broken when one person chooses to forgive rather than retaliate. *d) Show others the love of Christ: **Jn 13:35**, Jesus says "By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another. When we respond to hurt with love and forgiveness, we point to Jesus*

Understanding that forgiveness is necessary does not make it easy to give. The Beatitudes are addressed to believers because God knows that we could never live up to these standards without him. He doesn't expect us to, he's also not going to help if we won't ask.

How can we be merciful?

1) Admit the reality of your hurt. We don't want to admit being hurt? Why? Admitting pain can make us feel weak as if we're ashamed for allowing ourselves to have been hurt in the first place. Pretending it's no big deal, because others may see it as inconsequential. But the hurt remains. We may be tempted to move past it before we really have. Ignoring pain doesn't make it go away Admitting pain to ourselves and to God is necessary to both extending and receiving his mercy.

2) Ask God to help you pardon the one who hurt you. We can be empowered to extend the mercy Christ extended to us. How do we do that?

- 1) turn to the Holy Spirit 2) Ask the Holy Spirit for the power and pardon of God.
- 3) Ask the Holy Spirit for the ability to see this person as he does and to see yourself as he does; **both as redeemed sinners.**
- 4) Ask Holy Spirit to help you extend to your enemy the mercy God has given to you.
- 5) Act as though the Holy Spirit has done this, reminding yourself that you have forgiven the other person every time Satan tries to bring the hurt back up.

3) Initiate restoration. Jesus taught us go directly to the person who sins against us **Matt 18:15** Decide to forgive the other person. Reach out to them, If I hurt you, I want to know it. Talk to me and not about me. And I to you. You must forgive before taking this step or your mercy will be conditioned by their response. *Forgiveness is me giving up the right to hurt you for hurting me. Mercy is not earned by the other person penance.* If our forgiveness is based on their response, then we will be unlikely to ever truly forgive.

4) Be realistic. Forgiveness is hard and we delude ourselves if we think otherwise. Time and practice can make it easier. Our greatest help is remembering how often we've been forgiven, by other people and our heavenly Father.

If mercy is something you have struggled to accept or give in the past, then being realistic about your progress will be even more important.

Which of these four steps to being merciful is most difficult for you to practice consistently over time? Why do you think that is the case?

Let us pray and reflect silently as we ask God: 1) Bring to mind anyone I need to show mercy. 2) Bring to mind anyone from whom I need to ask for forgiveness 3) Help me walk these four steps faithfully as I seek to experience mercy this week.

A powerful principle behind this Beatitude is the principle of sowing and reaping. The Bible teaches in Galatians 6:7 "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

"The Father of mercy and the God of all comfort." 2 Cor. 1:3

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, Just as Christ God forgave you." Eph. 4:32

"Because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." Eph. 2:4-5

"Remember O LORD, your great mercy and love for they are from old. Psalm 25:6

"The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The LORD is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works." Psalm 145:8-9

"What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'" Romans 9:14-16

"For I desire mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." God declared in Hosea 6:6

In Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus illustrates why God only extends mercy to Those who are themselves merciful.

WHAT IS Forgiveness Not?⁶

Misconceptions abound when the word *forgiveness* is mentioned. Some think forgiveness is the equivalent of *excusing* sin, saying that what was wrong is now right. Yet this is not the example of forgiveness that Jesus displayed. When He encountered the mob of men eager to stone a woman caught in adultery, He chose not to stone her; however, never did He *excuse* her. Instead, He said, "Go, and sin no more" (John 8:11 KJV). To help correct any confusion, you need to know *what forgiveness is not*!

- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** circumventing God's justice.
It is allowing God to execute His justice in His time and in His way.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** waiting for "time to heal all wounds."
It is clear that time doesn't heal wounds—some people will not allow healing.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** letting the guilty "off the hook."
It is moving the guilty from your hook to God's hook.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** the same as reconciliation.
It takes two for reconciliation, only one for forgiveness.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** excusing unjust behavior.
It is acknowledging that unjust behavior is without excuse, while still forgiving.

- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** explaining away the hurt.
It is working through the hurt.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** based on what is fair.
It was not "fair" for Jesus to hang on the cross—but He did so that we could be forgiven.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** being a weak martyr.
It is being strong enough to be Christlike.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** stuffing your anger.
It is resolving your anger by releasing the offense to God.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** a natural response.
It is a supernatural response, empowered by God.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** denying the hurt.
It is feeling the hurt and releasing it.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** being a doormat.
It is seeing that, if this were so, Jesus would have been the greatest doormat of all!
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** conditional.
It is unconditional, a mandate from God to everyone.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** forgetting.
It is necessary to remember before you can forgive.
- ▶ ***Forgiveness is not*** a feeling.
It is a choice—an act of the will.

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance." (Proverbs 1:5)