

40-05-07.wpd --Blessed Are the Merciful
 grace, mercy, forgiveness, judgment, holiness

Mat 5:7

When we show mercy to others, we are tapping into the heart of God.

INTRODUCTION:

--Mat 5:7, *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

--People sometimes get a false concept of God in their minds. They feel He's an old grouch who just waits for humans to make mistakes, so He can slap us with a big divine flyswatter. That's not the picture the Bible paints of God. Yes, He's a God of judgment, and as the just Judge of the universe, He metes out justice fairly. But He also is *merciful*.

--In the four beatitudes preceding this one, the characteristics that Jesus calls "*blessed*" or "*happy*" seem, to human thinking, just the opposite of *happy* (*blessed are the poor... the mourners, the meek, the hungry and thirsty*). But in this beatitude, we come to a characteristic that reflects God Himself. He is merciful, and *blessed are the merciful*.

--Remember, each beatitude isn't meant to stand alone, but all describe something that should be true of every believer. All Christians are to behave in a merciful way, and the reward is that "*they will be shown mercy.*"

HOM.idea.

I. God's Example of Mercy

- A. When Adam and Eve sinned, God could have abandoned them to their fate, but He had mercy on them:
 1. They'd been warned that on the day they ate the forbidden fruit, they would die, but God in His mercy spared them, and instead, animals were slain on that day. (This was only the beginning of God's mercy toward human sinners; the fullness of mercy came with His Son's death on the Cross-- Rom 5:8, But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.)
 2. In their guilt and fear, Adam and Eve tried to hide from God, with Whom they'd previously enjoyed open fellowship; but God in His mercy went looking for them. (All through the Bible it is God that initiates the search for sinners, while sinners try to flee from Him or give Him excuses for their sin.)
 3. Although Eden was a safe place for nude humans, the newly cursed world, with its harsh elements and cold weather, was not.

After eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve's first act of moral independence from God was to decide that clothing was good, nakedness was evil, and covering up with fig leaves was a moral remedy. If God had agreed with their thinking, He might have sent them out of Eden dressed that way, but in His mercy He clothed them in the skins of the animals He had slain both to protect them and to remind them how the blood of innocence had covered (or atoned for) their sin.

- B. Judgment did fall on our first parents, and the results still effect us and all creation, but in the midst of judgment, God is merciful, because He is love, and His love manifests both justice and mercy.
 1. In *justice*, He shows His unwavering love of righteousness and truth, when they are threatened by evil and falsehood.
 2. In *mercy*, He shows a protective love for His creation by acting to relieve or thwart the damage and suffering brought by evil and falsehood. He especially wants to stop them from bringing us under judgment.... He said to Ezekiel in Ezek 33:11, Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'

TRANS: God wants *mercy* in the hearts of His people, *mercy* in their behavior, because that's what's in His heart and His behavior. Judgment is something He alone is equipped to administer, and He says to avoid it: "*Judge not, that you be not judged.*" But *mercy* is something He looks for in believers: *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.* Then we are called to learn what mercy is and how to manifest it in our lives....

II. Our Call to be Merciful

- A. The meaning of mercy is best seen in its grammatical meaning in Latin [*miseriordia* = *miseria* (pain) + *cordis* (heart) = "pain of the heart"] (God's heart is pained to see our suffering, and the only way His pain is alleviated is by getting involved with us in our suffering... that gives a big indication to us about how we are to be merciful.)
- B. In following God's example of being merciful to Adam and Eve, we can see how we are to be merciful to those in need:
 1. When someone sins against us, our first thought might be about seeking justice, or getting even, but God is in charge of the

justice department. He wants us to show *mercy* by forgiveness.

- a. Forgiveness means "releasing" a person, as if from a debt
 ("*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*")
 - b. Forgiveness should be given whether or not the guilty party is seeking it (God intervened to spare Adam and Eve from an immediate death even when they were apparently unrepentant, just as Jesus pronounced from the Cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.")
2. When we come across those who are in a miserable condition, we need to let them know that we care.
- a. They may be in an emotionally distraught condition that needs our physical *presence*, our *touch*, our *words*, or our *silence*.
 - b. They may be facing a situation that needs our encouragement, our support, our offer of "Is there anything I can do to help?"
 - c. Some might be confused about their predicament and need our kindness of spending time in discussion to straighten them out, as God did with Adam and Eve (although we must be led of the Spirit in doing so, or we might lead them into more confusion).
3. When we learn of the those in poverty, and we have resources to help, we need to do it. (Our tendency is to show mercy to our own, and ignore the needs outside our social and family circles, but Jesus, in His parable of the Good Samaritan, showed that meeting human needs knows no social, racial, or other barriers.

CONCLUSION:

--I said no beatitude stands alone. As various springs feed a river, this beatitude of mercy is fed by those preceding it ("*poor in spirit...they that mourn...the meek...those hungering and thirsting for righteousness*").

--Humanity has a built-in reflex to *feel compassion* and *show mercy*, and some might say they need no Christian creed to practice it. Their practice, I believe, has the same divine source in the heart of God, but it lies buried like an unacknowledged underground river that pops up here and there. Without Christ's teaching streaming down through history, this virtue would not be so well nourished in among non-Christians.

But among us, *mercy* ought to be displayed, not occasionally, but daily in *thought, word, and deed*. **When we show mercy to others, we are tapping into the heart of God.** It is our best testimony to the world that we know Him. It is the best advertisement of our Christian faith.