

Text: Matthew 5:7 (Pew Bible pg.958)

Title: “Giving and Getting Mercy”

INTRODUCTION

Let’s open our Bibles and stand as I read Matthew 5:1-12. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus lays out the birthmarks of the child of God ... of the person who follows Christ into the Kingdom of God. And Jesus introduces the Sermon on the Mount with eight radical statements called the Beatitudes (meaning “to be congratulated”), which we are studying during these summer months. Follow along as I read Matthew 5:1-12. Prayer. As you’re seated keep your Bibles open to Matthew 5:7.

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

Remember that these statements are not like marbles that are thrown out randomly, but they are strung together like pearls on a necklace in a logical sequence. If I have come to a place of brokenness over my spiritual poverty before God (#1) ... if I have come to a place of being truly sorrowful that I have grieved the heart of God by my sin (#2) ... if I have come to a place where I then realize I have to release my life to God with a spirit of meekness and humility (#3)... and if I have then come to hunger and thirst for the life of God within me (#4) ... then inevitably this will change the way I look at other people. Seeing God as He is, and seeing myself as I am, I will then see others differently ... with mercy.

Simply put, mercy means to show genuine compassion for others. It means to show (not just feel, but show) kindness and concern toward someone in serious need. And it all starts with God.

I want you to remember the three movements of God’s mercy:

1. GOD HAS SHOWN MERCY TO US.

The fact is that the human spirit is not naturally merciful. In our sin we are prone to judge and condemn others. So we will not be able to show mercy until we are shown mercy that changes our hateful hearts. And that’s what God has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:5a - he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

We are like drowning people who cannot do a thing to save ourselves.

ILLUSTRATION – You know, this time of the year hardly a day goes by that we don’t hear about someone drowning in a swimming pool or a local lake. It’s so sad! Drowning is one of the leading causes of death in the US every year. When we think of someone drowning we assume that the person will splash, yell, and wave for help. That’s probably what we think we would do. Actually, research done by the U.S. Coast Guard Search and Rescue Team reveals that when someone is drowning, the person will instinctively display the following five characteristics:

- Except in rare cases, drowning people are physically unable to call for help. That's because we're designed to breathe first and speak later.

- Drowning people can't stay above the water long enough for them to exhale, inhale, and call for help.
- Drowning people cannot wave for help. They are forced to extend their arms laterally and press down on the waters' surface.
- Drowning people cannot voluntarily move toward a rescuer or reach out for a piece of rescue equipment.
- Drowning people can only struggle on the surface of the water for 20 to 60 seconds before sinking.

And all these responses are instinctive. We can't save ourselves. And when it comes to our spiritual condition, we can't save ourselves. But our merciful God saw our helpless, hopeless condition and sent His Son to rescue us.

But to be even more accurate, we are not flailing around trying to save ourselves; we are already dead at the bottom. The Bible says...

Ephesians 2:4 - But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

Ephesians 2:5 - made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

And so God has shown mercy to us by sending His Son to rescue us by paying the price for our sin. And when we put our trust in Him, when we stop trying to rescue ourselves, in mercy He saves us.

The next movement of mercy is this...

2. GOD NOW SHOWS MERCY THROUGH US.

You see, God is merciful toward all humans. And often the way He demonstrates and shows mercy is through the merciful actions of other people.

EXAMPLE: Remember the parable told by Jesus about the king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants who owed him money. One servant who owed a huge sum of money couldn't repay it. He begged the king for mercy, and the king took pity on that servant and canceled the whole debt. That same servant then found a fellow-servant who owed just a paltry amount of money to him. When the fellow-servant couldn't repay the debt the first servant (who had been shown such great mercy), grabbed his fellow-servant by the neck and began to mercilessly choke him. Word got back to the king about how this servant had treated his fellow-servant and the king had him thrown into prison until he paid back the huge debt he owed. And Jesus summarized the parable by saying:

Matthew 18:35 - "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

So God expects us to be merciful to others because that is an important way that He pours mercy into the lives of people. So in Christ God has shown mercy to us in the past. He now shows mercy through us in the present. And in the future...

3. GOD WILL SHOW MERCY TO US.

There is a day of judgment coming in which we will all stand before God. The mercy that is shown me in that day is in keeping with the mercy that I have shown to others here in this life.

James 2:12 - Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,

James 2:13 - because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

The point is not that I should be merciful if I want God to be merciful to me when I stand before Him in heaven. The point is in my sinful condition apart from Christ I'm not naturally merciful. But God has been merciful to me in the past, and He will show me mercy in the future. Sandwiched between those two great acts of mercy, how can I ever be anything but merciful to others?

So here Jesus clearly lays out the radical lifestyle to which He calls His followers. And these are radical words because they reflected the opposite values of those found in the religion of Jesus' day. Self-righteous Jews were not inclined to be merciful. In fact, to many of them, it wasn't seen as a virtue. In their mind you show mercy to the people who were merciful to you. That's what Jesus was getting at when He says later in the Sermon on the Mount...

Matthew 5:43 - "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

Matthew 5:44 - But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 5:45 - so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

That's the mercy of God flowing through us to others. And Jesus didn't just teach it ... He lived it. To look in the face of Jesus was to look into the face of pure mercy. He reached out to hurting people. He made time for the sick, crippled, blind, lame, deaf, as well as failures and sinners. Remember, mercy means to show genuine compassion for others. It means to show kindness and concern toward someone in serious need. And it flowed freely out of the life of Jesus; and it should flow out of the lives of people who follow Jesus.

What does mercy look like? Mercy is not just pretending to care; we should act with mercy. It's not just feeling compassion; it's showing compassion. Let me be a little more specific:

- **Mercy looks like a shed tear.**

Romans 12:15 ESV- Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Only a heart of mercy can feel so deeply for and with others that we share their joy and their pain. If you're never genuinely moved by the needs of others, ask God to break your heart. Sometimes

God will take us through pain or weakness in our lives so that we will understand the pain that other people feel.

If you have trouble showing mercy to others ... trouble feeling deeply for others in their weakness ... try this: Put yourself in their skin for a minute. If you were in that person's skin ... in their situation ... what would you want and need others to do for you?

ILLUSTRATION – For years it really bugged me when there was a screaming child on an airplane. And I would think, “Why doesn't that parent do something about that child? They're not a very good parent.” Then the Lord gave me children who would sometimes fly with me ... and they screamed, no matter what we tried. So now I'm a little more sympathetic and merciful because I've been where they are.

By the way, this is the reason we have such a merciful and sympathetic High Priest in Jesus ... One who feels our weaknesses and our trials. It is because He literally put Himself in our skin ... for 33 years without sin. That's why He can sympathize with our weakness.

- **Mercy looks like a helping hand.**

On one occasion some parents approached Jesus for help with their son who was tormented by a demon. They begged Jesus:

Mark 9:22 - “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

Of course, Jesus can and Jesus cares. Jesus helped this family by casting out the demon that tormented their son. Maybe the word for you today is to quit giving the heavy hand of judgment and start giving a helping hand of mercy.

- **Mercy sounds like a kind word.**

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

ILLUSTRATION - Who of us doesn't appreciate a kind word when we have failed? Like most US presidents, the late Richard Nixon made it a habit to call the championship teams (NFL, NBA, MLB, etc.). But Nixon went beyond that common practice; he would call the losing team. Someone once asked President Nixon why he did that. He answered: “Everyone calls you when you're a winner; only your friends call when you fail.”

- **Mercy looks like a zipped lip.**

Sometimes mercy is shown by what we say; sometimes it is shown by what we *don't* say. I have been shown mercy many times when people rightfully could have pointed out a flaw in my life ... but they didn't.

Someone said: “Some things are better left unsaid. If only I could determine which things.”

ILLUSTRATION – I was listening to a pastor recently talk about how his mother drove this truth home to her children. His mother had a silly little saying ... the kind that has a way of sticking with you: “Good thought, hurt you not, gossip never, friends forever.” Let’s repeat that.

That’s what the Bible means when it says:

Ephesians 4:29 - Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Gossip or speaking disparagingly about another person is one of the most unmerciful things we can do. And don’t let your ears be the trash can for someone else’s garbage. Walk away.

- **Mercy feels like a forgiving spirit.**

It has been observed that grace is God giving us what we do not deserve in the way of blessings. Mercy is God withholding from us what we actually deserve in the way of judgment. We see this in...

Lamentations 3:22 - Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions (mercies) never fail.

When we experience God’s merciful forgiveness we are obligated to show it to others who have wronged us.

Colossians 3:13 - Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

- **Mercy looks like a bowed knee.**

Rather than judging and being critical of others, what if we just prayed for them. The Lord in His Word invites us:

Hebrews 4:16 - Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Mercy from the Lord is accessed through prayer ... mercy for ourselves and mercy for others. When I have felt a merciless, judgmental spirit come up in me I am learning to pray, “Lord have mercy on me.” Then I pray, “Lord have mercy on them.”

ILLUSTRATION – Last week I visited a young lady in the hospital who was the victim of a hit-and-run incident. She was crossing the street and a drunk driver ran over her and didn’t stop to help her. I was told about the young lady by a member of our church. The young lady’s family lives in California and hadn’t arrived yet, so I stopped by just to pray with her. When I walked into that hospital room I felt so much faith that I was astonished. Some strangers, who happened to be strong

believers, had befriended this young lady. I visited with them and asked if I could pray for her before I left. Of course they were happy for that. So I held the young ladies hand and prayed for her. And when I finished praying she squeezed my hand and she continued the prayer. Here she was with cuts and bruises and broken bones all over her body, and groggy from the pain medication they had given her ... but she prayed. She prayed for the guy who ran over her. She asked God to meet whatever need it was in his life that caused him to get drunk and to run away rather than stopping to help. Friends, that's what mercy looks like! That young lady is wounded healer.

Jesus said...

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

Jesus is saying to His band of followers, "Congratulations, you merciful ones. That's who you are as My followers ... merciful ones. Congratulations! You will be shown mercy."

You see, we show mercy because we have been shown mercy. A little later in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 7:1-2 - "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

I don't know about you, but I need a lot of mercy. And I live around people who need a lot of mercy. Let God's mercy flow through you.