

# **Teachings of Jesus**

## **Blessed Are the Merciful**

### **Matthew 5:7**

#### **Introduction**

The beatitudes are the eight statements of blessing spoken by Jesus at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Chapter 5. Each statement begins with "Blessed are..." The Greek word translated "blessed" means "spiritual well-being and prosperity" and refers to a deep joy of the soul. Those who experience the blessing of these beatitudes are the poor, those who mourn, the meek, the hungry for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted.

The blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven are comfort, inheritance of the earth, a filling, mercy, a view of God, and called sons of God, an inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven. Those whom Jesus describes in this passage have a different quality of character and lifestyle than those still "outside the kingdom." Those who make a significant impact for God in our world have to be different from it. True believers must have unique qualities of character that distinguish them from others. It's not just an outward form of legalistic holiness that sets them apart, but an inner joy and peace and gladness that flows out of the abundant life of fellowship with Christ. This fountain of spiritual life is a continual refreshing provided by the graciousness of the Holy Spirit of God. How many of you know it is the joy of sins forgiven that inspires us to be a constant source of blessing and joy to our world.

There is a relaxing, quiet gentleness about a person who is filled with God's Spirit. And there is an absence of abrasiveness and pride. Instead the attitude of mercy and compassion to others is distinct and obvious. God places a great emphasis upon mercy as a part of true Christian behavior. He not only desires for us to show mercy, He insists on it.

So, before we look at this fifth beatitude, let's read them once again from Matthew's Gospel Chapter 5: (Read)

What Jesus asks of us in the beatitudes, He is an example of himself.

- He tells us to be poor in spirit but only after he empties himself, taking the form of a servant and is born in the likeness of men according to Philipians 2:6-7. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:9 that it is 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sake he

became poor.” Jesus is the perfect example of one who is poor in spirit.

- He sets an example for us in mourning. His heart breaks over Jerusalem, the unrepentant capital of Israel, and tears flow down his face as He yearns to relieve the distress of their sinfulness. And at the tomb of Lazarus he again is seen weeping, not just over the death of a friend, but in recognition of the separation that faces every human as a consequence of the sin that dominates our world. Jesus weeps for us all!
- He demonstrates his meekness in submissiveness to His Father’s will – even when faced with the agonizing prospect of facing crucifixion. He says only what His Father instructs him to say and he does only what His Father approves. He acknowledges the authority of the Father and never steps outside the Father’s will.
- His hunger and thirst for righteousness is so great that he on many occasions calls out the hypocrisy and inconsistencies of the scribes and Pharisees. And on one occasion when he enters the Temple the disciples witness the fulfillment of the prophetic word ‘the zeal for thy house has consumed me’ as Jesus drives out the money changers saying, ‘my house shall be called a house of prayer, not a den of thieves.’
- And in our lesson today, Jesus again sets the example in mercy. In Matthew 9:27 two blind men cry out to Jesus with the words, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us’ and He heals them. Again in Chapter 15:22 the Canaanite woman with the demon possessed daughter doesn’t know much about Jesus, but she knows enough so cry out, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord.’ And situation after situation in the New Testament records this same request – Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Mt. 17:15; Luke 17:14.

## **I. The Merciful**

Why did the people think Jesus was so merciful? Think about it. Do people see you as a merciful and forgiving person or are you more of the grudge bearing pit bull variety? Jesus received requests for mercy because people recognized his life was a demonstration of it. Several times in the Gospels it states that Jesus had compassion on the crowds. So when we look at these beatitudes we can hear them saying to us – this is the way Jesus is – be like Him!

Mercy is one of the attributes of God. Being merciful is caring for someone who is obviously wrong and deserves judgment. It is to care to the point where we are prepared to get involved in the hardship and suffering and difficulties that come with rescuing the condemned. It is not excusing or

overlooking the faults and wrongdoing; it is seeing the potential for good and allowing a person opportunity to change. It is easy to love those who love you. Reciprocity teaches us to give back to those who help us. But mercy is more than that. Mercy is the strength of character that shows kindness to those who would kill us if they could. It is expressing compassion even though those who are ready to crucify us with criticism and scorn. It is caring for those who dislike us and belittle us without cause.

Many believers have no patience at all. No mercy. No compassion. No concern for any of those who don't live up to their particular expectation. How many times have you turned up your nose at those who disagree with you or oppose you who think differently than you do? I think many of us would have to confess that we are kind only when it serves our own selfish purposes. But when it comes to really caring about people who've made mistakes and fallen through sin we have only scorn and disdain to offer them.

So how do the fallen receive mercy?

## **II. Receiving Mercy**

It's always easier to insist that you're right and everyone else is wrong. Politicians today have made a career out of it! But mercy is not compatible with a self-righteous attitude. Nor does mercy tolerate the inconsistencies and wrongs of others. Mercy is not a weak-kneed indifference to sin. It is a caring concern that attempts to right the wrong without regard for the personal cost involved.

Jesus didn't just stroll around doling out mercy and forgiveness. He gave it to those who sought it out! To those who realized the horribleness of their actions and begged for a change to improve their standing. Only those who can admit their fault have even a remote a chance of receiving mercy. The law teaches you reap what you sow! So Jesus takes this straightforward precept and says 'if you sow mercy, you will reap mercy. I know it's true that often in life there are those to whom mercy is extended who turn around and dishonor the very one that showed them mercy. But that does not mean we give up on mercy. Jesus is our example. He came to his generation with love and compassion and mercy. He did nothing but good.

He healed the sick, helped the suffering, encouraged the downhearted, and forgave the sinful. And still His generation turned against him. They ridiculed, abused, despised, and rejected Him. And in the end their hatred became so strong that they finally crucified him. They couldn't stand the fact that he would forgive people who were obviously sinners. And yet from His

own mouth at His crucifixion, he cries out to His Father on their behalf, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The very self-righteous ones who wanted him dead, he pleads for. What compassion, what love, what mercy!

By the way, if Jesus, the Son of God, didn't receive mercy from this world, it's doubtful we will either. Only those who recognize and understand the depths of sin can show mercy. So how do we obtain it? Well, surprisingly it often comes to us from those we least expect it. And it always comes from the abundance of a God who is merciful.

It is a true miracle that a God who is absolutely perfect can look upon us with compassion and offer us mercy. It is because of God's mercy that Jesus willingly offers himself as the sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world. The justice of God must be satisfied. His law demands it. The penalty of sin must be exacted. And the wages of sin is death! So Jesus volunteers to take our place and pay the penalty for our sin which allows God to extend to us his mercy and the opportunity to start a new life. But you have to ask Him to receive it! Obtaining mercy requires humility and true repentance. Nothing will humble you any more than the mercy of God. It is the mercy, the concern, the kindness of God that forgives my faults and accepts me into His royal family as His son. His mercy allows me to stand acquitted of my wrongdoing and lets me stand without guilt and shame in his presence. His mercy lets me begin anew with joy and anticipation for a peaceful life.

Too often we are too tough on the sinner and not tough enough on the sin. When the woman taken in adultery was brought to Jesus for his verdict – he demonstrated mercy. He didn't condemn her to death – but he did insist that she change her ways! Maybe it's time for you to change your ways! Jesus was more interested in the damage that was being done to this woman because of the sin than he was on the particular type of sin she committed. And what we need to realize is that all sin destroys and injures the very people God created to be instruments of praise and glory. And it is the mercy of God that reaches out with compassion and concern to those who are even at the depths of sin. The merciful take time to understand why people behave the way they do and then take steps to help them correct those ways.

Christ has called us to experience the blessing of being merciful.

### **III. The Blessing of the Merciful**

As believers we are to experience forgiveness and compassion and demonstrate it. That does not mean we overlook sin and sweep it under the

carpet. It means we are frank and honest about confronting sinful behavior but instead of passing judgment we care enough to bring others to God and let them experience his mercy through us.

As Galatians 6:1 says, Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>Each one should test his own actions.

The blessing for the merciful is they hear the words of God and in the end obtain His mercy.

Matthew 25:34-35 says, Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

If you want to live a blessed life then be a blessing! Don't be a source of irritation and scorn, and ridicule. Be an inspiration. Be compassionate. Be merciful!

## **Conclusion**

Remember this, the merciful have no sympathy at all for sin and never cover it up from view. Guilt is a condition that precedes the exercise of mercy. In fact, mercy pre-supposes the fact of guilt. No one can be a subject of mercy unless they realize just how much they deserve punishment. However, the greater the virtue of mercifulness, the richer is its reward. When appropriately exercised mercy confers intense happiness and relief to a person.

It is by his manifested love that God overcomes the hearts of even his enemies. When God reveals his great love, he subdues the hearts of even those who were once His enemies and even though they deserve to be

banished forever, he rejoices over them as one who has found great treasure.

When the prodigal son returned, famished and filthy, yet penitent, the father is seen rushing forth to meet him, his heart running over with joy. If you judge the joy of heaven by your own experience, you ought to be able to conclude that God's most intense happiness is found in the exercise of mercy.

The exercise of mercy has always been God's intention, and thank God it is a present reality. Mercy is the virtue behind God's plan of redemption. The manifestation of God's mercy confounds Satan and all hell. What can they say when they see the personal cost at which God exercises His mercy!

Satan's plan to overthrow the Kingdom of Heaven by introducing sin into our world, has in the end only served to strengthen it, because we have obtained the blessing of God's mercy!

So Jesus says, Congratulations to those who learn the ways of mercy!