

## 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..." When Jesus uses the word "blessed," he describes a spiritual well-being 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, those hungry and thirsty 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, fulfillment, mercy, a view of God, being called the children of God, and receiving an inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven.

The people Jesus describes in this passage have a different character and lifestyle than those still "outside the kingdom." Believers who make a significant impact for God in our world have to be different from it. They must have unique qualities of character that distinguish them from other people. It's not an outward form of legalistic holiness that sets them apart, but an inner joy, peace, and gladness that flows out of their fellowship with Christ.

It is a joy to know your sins are forgiven. That is what inspires us to be a constant source of blessing and joy to our world. There is a quiet gentleness about a person filled with God's Spirit. There is a distinct and obvious attitude of mercy and compassion for others in them. God places a great emphasis on mercy as a part of genuine Christian behavior.

Let's take a look at this fifth beatitude in Matthew's Gospel Chapter 5. "Then He (Jesus) opened His mouth and taught them, saying: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy."* (Matthew 5:2-7 NKJV)

Jesus is a perfect example of what He asks of us in the Beatitudes. Jesus tells us to be poor in spirit, but only after he empties himself and takes the form of a servant, according to Philippians 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 also 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. At the tomb of Lazarus, he again weeps, not just over the death of a friend, but in recognition of the separation that faces every

human being as a consequence of the sin that dominates our world. Jesus weeps for us all!

He demonstrates meekness by submitting to His Father's will – even when faced with the agonizing prospect of facing crucifixion. He only says what His Father tells him to say, and he only does what His Father tells him to do. He always acknowledges the authority of the Father, and he never steps outside the Father's will. His hunger and thirst for righteousness are so great that he often calls out the hypocrisy and inconsistencies of the scribes and Pharisees right in front of them.

On one occasion, when Jesus entered the Temple, the disciples witnessed the fulfillment of the prophetic word, 'The zeal for thy house has consumed me,' then, Jesus drove out the money changers, saying, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer, not a den of thieves.'

In this fifth Beatitude, Jesus again sets the example of mercy. In Matthew 9, two blind men cry out to Jesus with the words, 'Son of David, have mercy on us' so He heals them. Again, in Chapter 15, the Canaanite woman with the demon-possessed daughter doesn't know much about Jesus, but she knows enough to cry out, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord.'

In situation after situation, the New Testament records this same request – Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Mt. 17:15; Luke 17:14. The people knew Jesus was mighty yet merciful.

## **I. Being Merciful**

Why did the people think Jesus was so merciful? Do people see you as merciful and forgiving, or are you more of the grudge-bearing pit bull variety? Jesus got these requests for mercy because people recognized his life was a demonstration of it. Many times, the Gospels state that Jesus had compassion for the crowds.

Mercy is one of God's attributes. Being merciful is caring for someone who is wrong and deserves judgment. It is to care to the point where we are prepared to get involved in the hardship, suffering, and difficulties of rescuing the condemned. It's not excusing or overlooking the faults and wrongdoing; it is seeing the potential for good and allowing a person the opportunity to change. It's recognizing that the offender is repentant and wants to change and provides the opportunity for that to happen.

It's 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 would show kindness to those who would kill us if they could. It expresses compassion even when others are ready to crucify us with criticism and scorn. It is caring for those who dislike us and belittle us without cause.

Some believers have no patience at all. No mercy. No compassion. No concern for anyone who doesn'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 because they 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 genuinely caring about people who've made mistakes and fallen, we have only scorn and disdain to offer them.

To be genuinely Christ-like, we must learn to be merciful. 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! He gave it 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 a remote chance of receiving mercy.

The law teaches that you reap what you sow! So Jesus takes this straightforward precept and says, 'If you sow mercy, you will reap mercy. Some receive mercy, turn around, and dishonor the very one who showed them mercy. But that does not mean we quit dispensing mercy.

Jesus is our example. He came to his generation with love, 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 killed him.

They couldn't stand that he would forgive people who were obvious sinners. And yet from His own mouth at His crucifixion, Jesus cries out on their behalf, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus pleads for the self-righteous ones who wanted him dead. That's true compassion! - That's love! - That's mercy!

Sometimes, those who recognize and understand the depths of sin are the best at showing mercy. So how do we obtain it? Well, surprisingly, it often comes from those we least expect. It always comes from the abundance of God, who is merciful.

It is truly a miracle that a perfect God can look upon us with compassion and offer us mercy. Because of God's mercy, 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! Jesus volunteers to take our place and pay the penalty for our sins, allowing 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. It is the mercy, concern, and kindness of God that causes Him to forgive my faults and accept me into His royal family.

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.

God is compassionate towards the sinner, but He is tough on the sin. When the woman taken in adultery was brought to Jesus – 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 sin was doing to this woman than he was in the particular type of sin she committed.

It is the mercy of God that reaches out with compassion and concern to those who are 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 by receiving mercy and then blessing others with mercy.

### **III. The Blessing of Mercy**

We have experienced God's forgiveness, compassion, and mercy as believers. Now, He calls upon us to demonstrate it before others. That does not mean we overlook and sweep sin and offenses 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, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." ([Galatians 6:1-4 NKJV](#))

The blessing for the merciful is they hear the words of God and, in the end, obtain His mercy. Matthew 25 says, *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'* "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to

you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' (Matthew 25:34-40 NKJV)

If you want to live a blessed life then be a blessing! Don't be a source of irritation and scorn. 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. No one can be a subject of mercy unless they realize just how much they deserve punishment.

However, the greater the virtue of mercy, the richer its reward. By his manifested love, 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 repentant prodigal son returned, famished and filthy, the father was 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 still present reality. Mercy is the virtue behind God's plan of redemption. The manifestation of God's mercy confounds Satan. Satan's plan to overthrow the Kingdom of Heaven by introducing sin into our world will, in the end, only serve to strengthen it because we have obtained the blessing of God's mercy!

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