**The Sermon on the Mount / Living Transformed Lives / A Call to Live Counter Culturally**

**Matthew 5:7**

**Previous Beatitudes:**

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall or will be comforted
3. “Blessed are the (meek) surrendered, for they shall inherit the earth.”
4. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

**This Week’s Beatitude:**

1. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

**Recalling, briefly, last week’s lesson:**

* **This beatitude tells us that satisfaction and happiness comes for those who have a hunger and thirst for righteousness**.
* **Right Living** – Being eager to live as God requires.
* **Doing Justice** – Wishing to see God’s will prevail with justice.

**Righteousness explained even further in specific ways: (the next few beatitudes)**

* **Mercy** (7), Purity (8), and Peacemaking (9).

**Starting Question: How does a heart become merciful?**

* One possible way to answer this may be to first have the first few beatitudes truly take their effect on our hearts and moving towards our actions. For how can one be merciful without the awareness of our spiritual bankruptcy before God (“poor in spirit” – vs 3), God’s Holy Spirit moving us to mourn for our own sin and the sins of others (“those who mourn” – vs 4), and God’s development of meekness/surrenderedness (“meek” – 5) in our hearts that compels us to want to conform to his righteous standard (“thirst for righteousness” - 6).
* *Summary*: The awakened person with a Poverty of Spirit, that Mourns over sin, with the Holy Spirit’s Meekness forming, and Righteousness seeking person will have a chance at becoming Merciful, which is a further expression of righteousness.

**John Piper Quote:**

* “The key to becoming a merciful person is to become a broken person. You get the power to show mercy from the real feeling in your heart that you owe everything you are and have to sheer divine mercy.”

**Second Question: What is Mercy?**

**Simplistic Explanation:**

* To give somebody what they deserve is what we call Justice.
* To give somebody better than what they deserve would be called mercy.

**Going a Little Further:**

* To help understand this question let’s explore what the Bible teaches is the opposite of Mercy.

**Matthew 9:10-13:**

10And as Jesusreclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. 11And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 12But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ *(quote from Hosea)* For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

**Hosea 6:6:**

For I desire mercy/steadfast loveand not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

**The Opposites:**

* The opposite of mercy is sacrifice (merely religious duty).
* The opposite of mercy is bondage to religious trivia (worries about trivial things versus weighty things).
* **The point is God wants his people to be alive in their hearts. He wants them to have feelings of affection toward him and mercy toward each other**. He does not want a people who do their religious duties in a dutiful/mechanical/perfunctory or merely a formal way.
* Jesus saw sinners as sick and people in desperate need of a physician, even though, in this case in Matt. 9, the outward appearance of the sinner was wealthy and put together (the tax collectors). What did the Pharisees see? They saw a ceremonial problem. They were worried about being contaminated by eating with such sinners. Their life seemed to be a mechanical implementation of rules. The Pharisees were enslaved to the trivial issues of ceremonial cleanness, when eternal sickness was at stake.

**Big Idea:**

* Blessed are the merciful. If we want to be blessed we must fight against the bondage of religious and secular trifles (against things that don’t matter), and devote our life to weightier matters: such as Justice, Mercy, and Faith. Mercy is a big deal. **It is one of the weightiest matters in all of life.**

**Mercy seen in Luke 10:25-37: The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

**Mercy was seen in four unique ways in this parable:**

1. First, the merciful **notices people in pain** and distress vs. 33.
2. Second, the merciful person **has internal compassion** towards a person in pain vs.33
3. Third, the merciful person **responds externally with a practical effort** to relieve the distress vs. 33.
4. Fourth, the merciful person responds, feels compassion, and notices the need regardless of a person’s religion, race, or social status (finantual wellbeing). In fact, **the Samaritan responded to the person in distress even though they were an enemy**.

* **An eye for the hurting, a heart with pity, an effort to help, even in spite of enmity—that’s mercy!**

**So what is its opposite of mercy in this parable?**

* This parable makes the same point as Matthew 9:13. There Jesus said, “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’” Here he says, “Go and show mercy like the Samaritan, not like the priest and the Levite.” The priest and the Levite stand for the same thing in the parable that the word “sacrifice” stands for in Matthew 9:13, namely, empty religious formalism (an emphasis on form over content).
* Jesus made up this story, to illustrate his point. Why did he choose to illustrate the opposite of mercy with a priest and a Levite? It is like saying, in modern time, a pastor or a minister of youth or music? **I think it is a warning to pastors and to all of us that there are far too many people who are caught up in the mechanics of religious activity with no eye to see distress or those in need, no heart to respond with compassion, and no effort to bring the relief of the gospel**?

**Back to the Text**: “Blessed are **the merciful, for they shall receive mercy**.”

* In other words, in the age to come when we meet God face to face, the people who will receive mercy from him are people who have been merciful.

**Theological Question:** Is this a salvation by works? Do we earn his mercy by our mercy?

* No, because an “earned mercy” would be a contradiction to the term mercy itself. If mercy is earned, it is not mercy; it’s a wage.

**Quote to Ponder:**

* Think of it this way, “God will be asking for your medical charts. You will hand them to him in all lowliness and meekness, and there **he will read the evidences of how you trusted him as your divine Physician**, and how the medicine of his Word and the therapy of his Spirit took effect in your life because you relied on them to heal you of your unmerciful disposition (our situation as sinners). And when he sees the evidence of your faith and his healing, he will complete your healing and welcome you into the kingdom forever.”