

As we look to the next beatitude we want to remind ourselves of the context of the Sermon on the Mount.

The first beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” taught us that It is obvious that Jesus means we must be *brought* to an understanding that we are poor in spirit and once we *realize* that, once we *understand* that we are spiritually destitute and bankrupt it then allows us to progress to the next phase of the Christian experience and that is mourning over our sinful condition.

The second beatitude, “blessed are they who mourn” follows and teaches us that once I realize how utterly destitute I am spiritually, I am to weep and grieve at the idea of my sinfulness. I am to be *upset* with my sinfulness in some way and express it.

Coming to repentance and faith is not just some mere intellectual decision. Everyone may not be as emotional as the next person in expressing their sorrow and mourning but somehow and someday there *must* be sorrow and mourning over spiritual poverty.

The third beatitude “blessed are the meek” is so anti world that it startles us and we learned that the essence of meekness results in the inner attitude of submission to authority. This person is pliable, moldable and willing to be shaped according to the will of God, be it expressed from God's providential dealings or from God's Word.

Now we also want to remember that all of these beatitudes are the normal expression of the Christian life and we progress from one to the other and at the same time we still recognize that we are poor in spirit with out the saving and sanctifying grace of God.

We also continue to mourn over our sin as we learn to love God more and hate our sinfulness more because of what Christ did for us as our Redeemer.

And meekness and humility are meant to have a greater place in our lives as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we are to be hungering and thirsting for righteousness which is conforming to the will of God then and we must be hungry and thirsty for the Word of God because it is there that we find the will of God. This is a desire that God will fulfill for it is His will.

So, this brings us to an incredibly challenging verse in the context of the Sermon on the mount and particularly in the beatitudes , which we have established as being the norms of the Christian life as we live in the Kingdom of God, **Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy Mt. 5:7**

This mercy first has to be understood in the context of the audience to whom Jesus was speaking. Again, this was primarily His disciples, those who would become the apostles and then secondarily the masses gathered on the mount within His hearing.

The question we must again ask ourselves as we have with all of the other beatitudes is what did mercy mean to the hearers and what did Jesus mean when He used the term.

So to begin we must look to the Scriptures that they would be familiar with, because Jesus is setting all of this teaching in a spiritual, not a secular context.

The first use of the word mercy in Scripture is found in Gen 19 where it is used as an adjective as the word merciful. It is also translated compassionate. It is the story of Lot's deliverance from Sodom and Gomorrah.

Ge 19:16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, *his wife's hand*, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful (compassionate) to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

Ge 19:19 "Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy (lovingkindness) which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.

Lot pleads with the Lord's messengers to let him go to Zoar. This is granted and once he is safe , **24 ¶** Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens.

Mercy as it is known here is an act of kindness on the one hand, yet it is tied to the sinfulness of mankind. The rest of Sodom and Gomorrah receive from God exactly what they deserve, judgement because of their wickedness. Lot and his daughters are spared by the Lord's mercy in the midst of man's sinfulness. But, his wife, who is not able to refuse the longing of her sinful nature in obedience to the command from God not to look back is also consumed in judgement even though she was brought out in the hands of the Lord's servants.

This causes us to remember that the Scripture teaches us that the Lord although He is patient and kind, Ps 103:9 states that, **He will not always** strive *with us*, Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.

God is patient, He is longsuffering, God is compassionate- He is merciful - because it is an attribute which belongs to Him. But He can at any time that He deems right and ultimately in final judgement of men for their sin, He will release His wrath and the fullness of His anger. Here we see mercy and wrath applied to the same person in Lot's wife.

This is why the prophet Habbukk prayed to God, LORD, I have heard the report about You *and* I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.

God is absolutely capable of doing both at the same time. While bringing wrath He can also show mercy. Why, because both are who He is and He is always all of who He is. He is never just the God of wrath or of mercy or of love or the omnipotent one. He is what He is all of the time and He never changes, He is immutable.

The distribution of the mercy of God is found and rooted in His sovereign will.

Ex 33:19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy/compassion on whom I will show mercy/compassion."

And Paul quotes this verse in **Ro 9:15**

What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

15* For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."**16*** So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.**17*** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."**18*** So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.**19*** You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"**20*** On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? **21*** Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?**22*** What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?**23*** And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,**24*** *even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

So while mercy can be expected from God as He so wills to have mercy, mercy *cannot* ever be demanded from God regarding salvation or any other thing.

Now we want to see mercy as it relates to men being merciful under the Old covenant.

Did God expect men who were in covenant with Him to be merciful, to show mercy to others?

Here is an example where mercy was not to be given.

"and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them *and* utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Dt. 7:2

And here is an example that God required mercy, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother. Zec.7:9

And yet another, "He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

We must note that in both of these cases, this is not what was being done but it was expected?

Why? Because of all the times that God showed mercy to Israel even in their rebellion.

If God would be merciful by not giving them what they deserved in the fullest measure at certain times, then they were to show mercy to others as a reflection of God's mercy to them and especially among themselves as Israel..

Again, we cannot get away from the idea that the mercy of God being granted or not granted seems predominantly tied to man and his sinful condition.

Where God is merciful even sinful men are expected to be merciful to some degree because we are made in the image of God and this attribute of God, mercy, is a communicable attribute.

That means that God has shared this capacity with us even though we cannot be merciful exactly the way He is or in the fullest measure that He can be merciful, yet men do have a capacity, although corrupted by sin, to be compassionate, to show lovingkindness - to be merciful to other men.

However, the mercy that God expects to be shown and lived out by His covenant people, whether under the Old or New Covenant is always greater than what He expects from other men.

Israel as a nation was called by God with certain privileges under the Mosaic Covenant. God was merciful to them time and time again even in their rebellion that proved their hearts as an entire people were not for God.

There were those under the Old Covenant who were genuine believers with changed hearts. They were expected to be merciful in a greater sense and so it is with us who are New Covenant believers.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

But before we fully apply this verse to us as New Covenant people who are God's kingdom dwellers let's examine some other dimensions of the mercy of God.

Mercy may also be more broadly understood in God's creation and yet related to man's sinful condition.

There is a general mercy, to all of His creation (Ps. 145:9)

The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works

This is particularly interesting. Why does the creation need to know the mercy of God. Romans gives us an answer,8:21-22 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

What corruption is the creation subjected to? The corruption of the fall of man into sin. The creation suffers and awaits its redemption in the New Creation of the heavens and the earth after all judgements upon men and angels are completed.

And there is a special mercy, to all of mankind that is not connected to the suffering caused because of sin (Matt. 5:45).

"so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous."

There are also some distinctive qualities of God's mercy:(1) Great mercy (I Kings 3:6).(2) Covenant mercy (Neh. 1:5).(3) Abundant mercy (Ps. 86:5).(4) Everlasting mercy (Ps. 103:17).(5) Tender mercy (Luke 1:78).(6) Rich mercy (Eph. 2:4).(7) Full mercy (Jas. 5:11).

It is very important for us to realize at this place in this message that the mercies which God bestows on the wicked are solely of a *temporal* nature; that is to say, they are confined strictly to this present life. There will be no mercy extended to them beyond the grave: "It is a people of no understanding: therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will show them no favor" (Isa 27:11). But at this point a difficulty may suggest itself to some - namely, Does not Scripture affirm that

Two things need to be pointed out in that connection. God can never cease to be merciful, for this is a quality of the divine essence (Psa 116:5); but the *exercise* of His mercy is regulated by His sovereign will. This must be so, for there is nothing outside Himself which obliges Him to act; if there were, that "something" would be *supreme*, and God would cease to be *God*. As we said earlier He is what He is all of the time and He never changes, He is immutable. He does what He does because of who He is.

It is pure sovereign grace which alone determines the exercise of divine mercy.

It is not the wretchedness of the creature which causes Him to show mercy, for God is not influenced by things outside of Himself as we are. If God *were* influenced by the abject misery of leprous sinners, He would cleanse and save *all* of them. But He does not. Why? Simply because it is not His pleasure and purpose so to do.

So, how do we apply our text to ourselves if we are truly the blessed of God?

We must understand that Jesus would have all the reference He needed to what He meant by saying, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

We have the same Scriptures that those He was speaking to had for understanding and for practical application of this teaching.

And this is where the challenge really is for us.

If we are really honest with ourselves we may find that we have failed miserably in showing mercy to others.

We become so wrapped up in ourselves and our needs that we forget the world around us that is suffering and in misery because of sin.

And sometimes, what we really want is revenge not justice with mercy as Habbakkuk prayed.

Let me give an example.

How do you relate to the events of an attack like 911?

Let's not even discuss God's purpose in these things but let's talk about how we may feel towards the perpetrators, the Muslims who did these horrendous and shameful acts of murder and barbarism in the name of a false God.

It is true that these men and all men like them whether Jews, Americans, Muslim or otherwise are murderers. But why are they murderers? They are murderers because they are sinful fallen men who are living out the depths of their natural depravity and who are guided by self deceit and Satanic deceit just like you were before you were saved by the grace of God.

All of us here today in our fallen human depravity have the capability of being the worst kind of person imaginable. Not that all men become the worst they could be, but we all have the potential to be killers, child molesters, professional thieves, prostitutes you name it. Paul said to the Corinthians,

1 Cor.6:9-11 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

So why are we blessed by God when we show mercy/compassion/lovingkindness to others? Because without the grace of God in our lives and the mercy of God bestowed upon us we are no different than any other lost sinner, no matter what we have or have not done.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved,⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. Eph. 2:4-9

And so we have a greater capacity to be merciful because it is the norm of the New Covenant believer to have the Holy Spirit indwelling us to empower us to be obedient to Christ.

And being merciful is what God demands of His kingdom people.

This mercy is something more than a feeling: it is *an operative principle*. It not only stirs the heart, but it moves the hand to render help unto those in need, for the one cannot be part from the other.

I Jn.3:17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

This verse makes it clear that no work of mercy is shown to those in misery except that it is rooted in an inward compassion. The "mercy" which is here mentioned: it is that which exerts itself in doing good, being a fruit of the love of God shed abroad in the heart.

This mercy is seen to be an unmistakable trait of the new man.

"The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth" (Ps. 37:21). It was "mercy" in Abraham, after he had been wronged by his nephew, which caused him to go after and secure the deliverance of Lot. It was "mercy" on the part of Joseph, after his brethren had so grievously mistreated him, which moved him to freely forgive them. It was "mercy" in Moses, after Miriam had rebelled against him and the Lord had smitten her with leprosy, which moved him to cry, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee" (Num. 12:13). It was "mercy" in David which caused him to spare the life of his arch-enemy when the wicked Saul was in his hands. In solemn contrast, of Judas we read "he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man" (Ps. 109:16).

So what are the ways we show mercies or what are the *duties* of mercy?

Lets first see the attitude we need to really be merciful to others.(Rom. 12:8),

or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

This is what gives chief value to the service rendered. If God loves a cheerful giver, it is equally true that He takes notice of the spirit in which we respond to His precepts.

So we need to cheerfully show mercy to the oppressed, the poor, the downtrodden, the miserable, the despicable, the alcoholic, the drug addict, the felon, the prostitute and even the terrorist. Why. If they never know the grace of God in salvation, they will be finally judged by God himself in perfect justice.

We are not to seek revenge but to look for mercy and justice.

Some other ways like meeting physical needs not expecting anything in return.

A word now on "for they shall obtain mercy.

Prov.21:21 He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness and honor.
"For they shall obtain mercy."

First, there is an *inward benefit*. The one who shows mercy to others gains thereby: The merciful man does himself good, But the cruel man does himself harm. (Prov. 11:17).

There is a personal satisfaction in the exercise of mercy and compassion and lovingkindness, which the fullest gratification of the selfish man is not to be compared with: "he that hath mercy on the poor, *blessed* is he" (Prov. 14:21).

Second, he reaps mercy at the hands of his *brethren*: the overruling providence of God causes him to be dealt with mercifully by others: not necessarily all the time but as God so wills it.

Third, he receives mercy from *God*: "with the merciful you will show Yourself merciful" (Ps. 18:25)—contrast "he shall have judgment without mercy that has showed no mercy" (Jam. 2:13).

Mercy will be shown to the merciful in the Day to come

The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains;^{17*} but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me--^{18*} the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord
(2 Tim. 1:16, 18)

keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.^{22*} And have mercy on some, who are doubting;^{23*} save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. (Jude 21.)

This is the greatest application of the mercy received because we are still awaiting the consummation of the kingdom where all things find their fullest application as far as the blessing and the favor of God are concerned in relation to His kingdom people.

Then let us prayerfully heed the exhortations of Romans 12:10; Colossians 3:12.

12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.
2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;^{13*} bearing with one another,

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and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord
forgave you, so also should you.

10

By way of illustration, Thomas Goodwin exhorts us: “You that have received this
mercy from God, show mercy to others. Use all that is within you so as to endeavor to
beget men to God. Though God alone does it, yet he uses means; though means
contribute nothing, yet God uses them as the clay to open the eyes