



Part 24: Blessed are the Merciful
Matthew 5:7

The mercy that God calls us to is an outpouring of His radical extravagant mercy of undeserved blessing and active compassion.

Beatitudes

- This is radical good news for the poor, the sad, the weak, and the desperate. This fits the context as seen in Matthew 4 of sick hurting people coming to Jesus. And as Jesus healed their broken bodies, He now gives words of healing to their broken hearts as they live under a broken kingdom.

“In his announcement of blessing, Jesus is both announcing good news to those socially disadvantaged and ostracized by the elites, and he is expressing a way of living that embodies the Way of the kingdom.” – Doug Brown

Definition of Mercy

- Mercy is often defined as not receiving what we deserve. From what we see in Scripture, that is true but there is so much more. Mercy is undeserved blessing and active compassion. Merciful – *elemos* – 1x in Hebrews 2:17 – character of Jesus. Root of *elemos* is *eleos* – Mercy - 23x.
- Striking use of mercy by Jesus in Matthew 9:13, Matthew 12:7: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” Jesus is quoting Hosea 6:6 where the context is of an unfaithful people with empty religious traditions. The context in Matthew 9 is Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. The context of Matthew 12 is in response to the disciples picking kernels of wheat on the Sabbath. Jesus is saying that God does not want empty action, He wants active compassion.

- Luke 6:32-36: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”
- Mercy – The Good Samaritan – Luke 10:36-37: “the one who had mercy on him.” In Vincent Van Gogh’s “The Good Samaritan” (1889), Van Gogh was a troubled soul who committed himself to a psychiatric asylum in the south of France. This is where he also painted “The Starry Night.” During his time there he also copied other paintings such as Delacroix’s painting of The Good Samaritan. Consider that as Van Gogh experienced misery, he sought mercy. Where there was such darkness, he longed for light and the mercy of God.

See painting of Van Gogh’s “The Good Samaritan”

- The Good Samaritan is a story of radical extravagant mercy. We see the radical mercy of the Samaritan man responding to a man beaten and robbed. We don’t know if the beaten man was a Jew or Samaritan. We don’t know if the man was good or bad. We don’t know if he provoked his attackers. All we do know is that he was a man in desperate need and the good Samaritan had compassion on him showing radical extravagant mercy. **It makes me wonder, “Do I show mercy and kindness to the needy regardless of the reason for their need?”**
- We also see the radical extravagant mercy of the good Samaritan in contrast to the priest and Levite who passed by on the other side. They don’t even check to see if the beaten man needs help. This is sad and ironic because the very people who were supposed to reflect a God of mercy and compassion just walked on by. **It makes me wonder, “Who do I try to ignore or forget? Is there any situation I try to walk on by?”**
- We also see the radical extravagant mercy in the extravagance of care. The Samaritan shows compassion, he cleans and bandages the wounds, puts the man on his own donkey, and takes him to the inn...all at his own expense and risk of time, money, and effort. **I wonder, “In my mercy am I willing to risk my own time, money, and effort for others? Would I still do it for those who might not appreciate it or even reject it?”**
- Example of mercy: Movie “A Man Called Otto”

Conditional Mercy?

- “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” The obvious question from this verse is, “Is God’s mercy conditionally based upon our mercy.” Is this saying, “If we are merciful, then He will be merciful?” Is this implying that we need to earn His mercy? The answer is a “NO, NO, NO”.
- What we know from the fullness of scripture and echoed in the beatitudes is that grace always precedes command. In the first four beatitudes, we see grace and blessing for the poor in spirit, grace and blessing for those who mourn, grace and blessing for the meek, grace and blessing for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Our mercy is because of God’s radical extravagant mercy to us first through His common grace to everyone and then the height and pinnacle of His love and mercy through the sacrificial death of His son, Jesus Christ. And through that transformative mercy we are merciful to others.

“Everywhere in the teaching of Jesus the test of one’s relation with God is one relation with the other people. The source of one’s relation with God, to be sure, can only be God. But once God has delivered mercy to believers, God intends that believers hand this mercy on to others...being a merciful, forgiving, or loving person is not a condition for God’s grace, but it is a necessary consequence.” – Dale Bruner, *The Christbook*

- But do we truly believe this radical extravagant mercy in a deep experiential way. Do we live from the outpouring of God’s mercy? Thought experiment: If God were to appear to you right now, what do you think He would say or do? Over the years, as I have discipled and mentored many, I have found that at the deep guttural level, many think God is either disappointed, mad, or apathetic of them. They are not living in the radical extravagant mercy of God.
- We are all on a journey of God removing the obstacles in our lives to fully receive His love and mercy. Suggestions: 1. *Stone by Stone: Tear down the wall between God’s heart and yours* by Jasona Brown; 2. Healing Prayer Ministry.

“There are two ways to live the Christian life. You can live it either for the heart of Christ or from the heart of Christ. You can live for the smile of God or from it. For a new identity as a son or daughter of God or from it. For your union with Christ or from it. The battle of the Christian life is to bring your own heart into alignment with Christ’s.” Dale Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*

Mercy to others

- We have received a radical extravagant mercy from God. And from the abundance of His mercy, we share His mercy with others. I truly believe this is one of the hardest things to do as a church (the people of God). We look in creating community, which is absolutely critical and necessary and the first priority...but sadly we often forget to look out. The mercy described in the story of The Good Samaritan is in response to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” We discover in the story that anyone who is in need is our neighbor. But how well do we actually know our neighbors?
- Neighborhood Parties On Us: \$500 grant for a party/dinner. If interested contact Adam Long, along@greenwoodcc.com.

Main Point: The mercy that God calls us to is an outpouring of His radical extravagant mercy of undeserved blessing and active compassion.

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you think of an example in your own life where you have received radical extravagant mercy from someone else?
2. What new thing have you learned about mercy from the scriptures we have looked at?
3. If God were to appear to you right now, what do you think He would say or do? Is it difficult for you to walk in the fullness of God’s mercy?
4. How can you show mercy to others where you live, work, play, and study?