

Upside Down Kingdom: Blessed are the Merciful Matthew 5:7ⁱ

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you this morning. For those of you that are guests, my name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are certainly glad you are with us today. And on behalf of our church family, we welcome you.

We would love the opportunity to get to connect with you. If you would, simply text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to 94-000. You will then be prompted to click on a link that will provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you. And here's our promise to you... we promise not to bombard your inbox. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you and to pray for you.

FESTIBRATION CELEBRATION:

I want to take a moment and celebrate something with you. Last Sunday we held Festibration out on our back lawn. Many of you donated candy and stayed to help set up and executed a hugely successful event. According to our registration records, 1,302 people attended Festibration! And 106 of you volunteered. And countless others donated candy and supplies.

The booth my Bible Study Group had, passed out the big candy bars that you guys donated. It was so awesome to see the kids' faces light up when they saw what we were passing out. Even some parents wanted to get in on that.

But perhaps the coolest thing that happened at Festibration, at least to me, was the fact that every kid, and even the adults that wanted one, got a bible. As I made my rounds to each booth, the folks that volunteered at the Bible Booth could not wait to share with me a story about one of the adults that came through.

Because of a generous donation, we had some really nice, leather bound, bibles in Spanish. One lady that took a bible told our team, "I've never owned my own Bible." Can you imagine?! Church, because of your generosity, and your serving, we put bibles in the hands of those that have never owned a copy of God's Word. Isn't that awesome?!?!

This story is a reminder of why we do this event. I just want to say, "Way to go, Trinity!"

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Well, we are in the middle of a series called, "The Upside Down Kingdom." We are looking at the Beatitudes in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5. So, I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to Matthew 5 as we zoom in on verse 6. By the way, if you do not have a bible with you this morning, there is one in the seat tray of the seat in front of you. And if you do not own a Bible, please feel free to take that one. Those are the bibles were donated to us, and we would love to pass that along to you.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Mercy Rule

If you have spent any time around me, you know that I love baseball. Now, I don't really like watching baseball on TV, but I love the game and I love being at the game. I also love coaching my boys in baseball.

And before every game, the umpires call the coaches to a pre-game meeting at home plate. At that meeting, they go over several things. One of the things that they always remind coaches about is the mercy rule. You know what the mercy rule is, right? It is a rule that when one team has taken a substantial lead, one that is virtually impossible to overcome, the game ends, even if there is time left in the game.

The idea is to speed up the game, but also to show mercy to the opponent that is losing severely. The mercy rule invokes a demonstration of mercy on the losing team so that they don't have to endure further angst and humiliation.

Today, our study brings us to Jesus' teaching about mercy. Which is again an upside-down teaching. It seems upside down because out of the context of baseball, we don't like to show mercy. Our culture has a no mercy approach.

Think about it for a moment. In professional sports, there is no mercy rule. In fact, coaches have been known to never take the foot off the gas pedal. Why? Because we want to put the game away early and demonstrate complete victory over another team.

Also, think about the cancel culture that seems to run rampant in our day and time. If you make one mistake, take one mis-step, cancel culture is ready to

write you off. No mercy when it comes to having a different viewpoint or making a mistake.

Now, certainly there are mistakes where the consequences warrant a severe measure. But what I'm talking about is even in a slight mistake, cancel culture is ready to cancel you out of existence. No mercy.

But Jesus teaches that life in the upside-down Kingdom, His Kingdom, requires a different approach. He says that those that demonstrate mercy are those that are truly happy and blessed.

MESSAGE:

Let's look together at the 5th Beatitude. Follow along in your copy of God's Word. Matthew chapter 5, verses 3-7. ³ *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* ⁴ *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* ⁵ *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."* ⁶ *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."* ⁷ *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."*

Today, I want to approach our Beatitude of study like we have with previous beatitudes. Our outline this morning will be Mercy defined, mercy supplied, and mercy applied. Let's first look at...

1) Mercy Defined.

Because our culture is not always merciful, mercy tends to be a word and a disposition that we don't fully understand.

Like our culture today, when Jesus speaks these words, the hearers were more than likely perplexed. The people of Jesus' day were not merciful. In fact, to show mercy was a display of weakness. The Romans were not a people filled with mercy. It's why they were able to exercise complete dominion over other regimes and why they were able to carry out such gruesome punishment like crucifixions.

Lucius Seneca, a popular Roman philosopher, said that mercy was quote, **"A the Disease of the Soul."** In other words, mercy is not normal, and any display of mercy reveals a weakness in someone. Mercy was a sign that one did not have what it takes to be a real Roman. Mercy was despised in the culture in which Jesus speaks.

But this characteristic of being merciless was not just for the Romans of Jesus' day. The Jewish religious leaders were a very merciless people as well. Consider the woman caught in adultery. Remember, in John 8, when the Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery before Jesus. They said that the Law of Moses commanded that such a woman be stoned. They each had stones ready to cast upon the woman until she died. But Jesus demonstrated mercy on the woman, and it ultimately led the religious leaders to drop their stones.

So, what is mercy? What exactly is Jesus teaching here?

The term translated here as merciful and mercy is the word that literally means beneficial or charitable. It is used in both the Old and New Testaments to talk about helping the afflicted and rescuing the helpless. In the Old Testament, it is used most often to refer to God's character. It is usually translated as His mercy, love, lovingkindness, and steadfast love.

In the New Testament, the word is used to describe Jesus Himself. Hebrew 2:17 says, *"¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become **a merciful and faithful high priest** in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."*

The word carries the idea of genuine compassion that expresses itself in genuine help. Mercy is demonstrated when we feed the hungry, when we comfort the hurting, when we love the outcast, and when we offer forgiveness to those who offend us.

Perhaps the greatest biblical display of mercy is that of the Good Samaritan. You remember the story. Luke 10:30-37. ³⁰ *Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead."* ³¹ *Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side."* ³² *So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."* ³³ ***But a Samaritan**, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had **compassion**.* ³⁴ *He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him."* ³⁵ *And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'* ³⁶ *Which of*

*these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him **mercy**." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

This really is a remarkable story. Most likely the man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho would have been a Jewish man, someone who looked down on Samaritans. More than likely, this man would have been mean and at the very least verbally abusive toward Samaritans. Yet, it was a Samaritan, that demonstrated mercy and came to his aid. The Samaritan showed mercy.

I think this example is key in our understanding of mercy. Because we often have a tendency to attach mercy to other words. But mercy differs from those words.

For example, **we have a tendency to equate mercy and forgiveness**. While mercy has much in common with forgiveness, it differs. Forgiveness necessitates that wrong has been done to you and therefore the person offending you is in need of you forgiving them. But mercy does not require an offense. Like the Samaritan man that helped, it sees a person in need and drives us to meet that need when we could have just passed by. Mercy is not the same as forgiveness.

But mercy certainly leads one to forgive. Mercy is required to come to the point of forgiving someone who has offended you. More on this in a moment.

Another term we often confuse with mercy is the word grace. Just like mercy and forgiveness differ, mercy and grace differ. Grace deals with sin itself, mercy deals with the effects of sin.ⁱⁱⁱ For example, God's grace offers freedom from our sin, that's salvation, and mercy offers relief from the consequence of our sin. God has been both gracious and merciful toward us.

In the example of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan showed mercy when he went to him and bound up his wounds. But the Samaritan showed grace when he paid for his stay at the inn. You see the difference?

We understand this when it comes to our spiritual condition. In our sin, we deserve eternal punishment in a real place called Hell. We have offended Almighty God. But, by God's grace, His free gift, we can be saved from our sin and enjoy eternity in Heaven. Pastor John MacArthur says it this way, "Mercy

says, 'No hell,' whereas grace says, 'Heaven.' Mercy says, 'I pity you'; grace says, "I pardon you."^{iv}

ILLUSTRATION: Hymn "At Calvary"

Perhaps you grew up in church and you remember the hymn, "At Calvary." In that great hymn, the refrain helps us see the distinction between mercy and grace. I'm going to spare you my terrible singing, but it goes, "Mercy there was great and grace was free, Pardon there was multiplied to me. There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary."^v

So, we see mercy defined. Now, let's look at...

2) Mercy Supplied.

Jesus says, ⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall **receive mercy**."

I think we have a tendency to look at this Beatitude and think, if I am a person that shows mercy, others will be merciful toward me. But that is not the experience that life shows us, is it? Often times, when we show mercy toward someone, they tend to take advantage of it.

When Jesus says that the merciful will receive mercy, there is an implied place where the mercy is supplied. The merciful receive mercy from God. This Beatitude does not mean that the merciful will be shown mercy by other people.

We know this because of the context of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon is contained in chapters 5 through 7 of Matthew's Gospel. 6 times in the Sermon on the Mount, all in Chapter 5, Jesus uses the phrases, "You have heard," and "But I say." And in these phrases, Jesus reveals the human condition.

He points out that we have heard it said that we are to give an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. That's retaliation, not mercy; our natural tendency. But Jesus says something different, He says to be merciful.

He also pointed out that we have heard it said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But Jesus gives us another way, a way of mercy. We are to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us.

My point is that humanity will not repay mercy with mercy. That only is the case in God's economy. And by being merciful people toward others, we may not receive mercy this side of glory, but we will receive mercy from God.

Another thing that is important to note is that the only way we will be people of mercy is by living according to the Spirit. In other words, I know you have felt it, our natural reaction is to be merciless. But that is the action of our flesh. When we live by the Spirit, powered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, we can then replace vengeance with mercy.

We are blessed when we realize the merciful way in which God has acted toward us, because we then are a merciful people. And when we reflect God's mercy toward others, we receive even more mercy from God.^{vi}

So, we have looked at mercy defined, and mercy supplied. In the time we have left, let's look at...

3) Mercy Applied.

I want us to take what we have learned about mercy and look at different ways we can be merciful. I want to look at three specific areas. First...

A) Extend Forgiveness

Perhaps someone has wronged you. Maybe it was a parent, or a co-worker, or a friend stabbed you in the back. Showing mercy toward them means we are willing to forgive them.

See, the truth is that God's grace is not only for those that have been wronged, but praise God it is also for those that have done wrong. The true hope from someone that has wronged you is that they would fall under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and realize that they are a sinner in need of surrendering to Jesus as Lord. And perhaps, most likely not immediate, your display of mercy that leads to forgiveness would be the catalyst the Holy Spirit uses to bring them to that realization.

Now, I want you to hear me clearly here. Abuse of any kind is not acceptable and if you have been abused or are currently being abused, it is God's desire that you get to a safe place. But it is also God's desire that your abuser recognize their sin and turn to Him. Because only in Christ are we redeemed and pursue godliness in our lives.

And forgiveness frees us, doesn't it? It no longer allows the person who has offended us to have power in our lives.

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, *"³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, as God in Christ forgave you."* This requires that we show mercy toward one another.

It is Jesus that taught the disciples to pray, *"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."* (Matthew 6:12).

Extending others is proof of being full of mercy. Secondly, let's be merciful via...

B) Acts of Kindness

Jesus tells us, and the Good Samaritan exemplifies that we are to be people that feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and offer any other help that is needed. God has always desired His people to be a people that demonstrated mercy by way of kindness.

The effects of the brokenness of our world surrounds us. And God has positioned us to be a merciful people by not only seeing it, but providing relief in the midst of it.

Extend forgiveness and show acts of kindness. Finally, well, thirdly not finally...

C) Restore Gracefully

No doubt that we are an imperfect people. And we will certainly come across another believer that is not living according to God's Word. In those situations, we must fight the tendency to cancel them and instead work to restore them. We all need accountability in our lives.

Galatians 6:1 says, *"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should **restore him in a spirit of gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."* We need to show mercy toward one another and the best way you can do that is to hold one another accountable, but do say in a spirit of gentleness, of grace.

CONCLUSION:

As we come to a time of response in our service this morning, I want to ask Jared and the band to come back up and lead us in that time of response. And as they are coming, I want you to consider how The Lord is stirring in your heart.

Have you received the mercy of God? Have you come to the realization that God has been gracious and merciful toward you? That even though you are a sinner, God loves you so much that He made a way for your to experience the forgiveness of your sin.

On the cross at Calvary, Jesus cried out a statement of mercy. Thought is was our sin that led to the cross, Jesus prayed, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

If you have not surrendered your life to Jesus, today is the day of salvation for you...

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this sermon: John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, David Brown, *“The Gospel According to Matthew Commentary,”* Matthew 5:1-16; Ligonier Ministries, *“Blessed are the Merciful,”* article published November 25, 2011, Ligonier.org, accessed November 3, 2021; John Piper, *“Blessed Are the Merciful,”* article published February 23, 1986, desiringGod ministries; Gregory Brown, *“Blessed Are the Merciful (Matthew 5:7),”* article published April 4, 2020, Bible.org; Got Questions, *“What does ‘Blessed are the merciful; Mean?,”* article accessed November 2, 2021, gotquestions.org; Bryan Loritts, *Radical Red Letters: “Blessed Are the Merciful,”* message preached October 18, 2020 at Hope Church Las Vegas; Michael Gossett, *The Upside Down Life: “The Tension of Mercy,”* preached October 17, 2021 at Green Acres Baptist Church; Skip Heitzig, *Expound, “Matthew 5:5-16,”* Calvary Church Albuquerque, October 19, 2011; J.D. Greear, *The Whole Story: “8 Ways to Be Happy, According to Jesus,”* Summit Church, September 25, 2016.

ⁱⁱ Found on ChristianPost.com. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/the-virtue-of-mercy.html> accessed on November 5, 2021.

ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*; page 191.

^{iv} *ibid*, page 192.

^v Hymnary.org, *“At Calvary,”* written in 1895 by William R. Newell.

^{vi} Adapted from Got Questions, *“What does ‘Blessed are the merciful; Mean?,”* article accessed November 2, 2021, gotquestions.org