

Matthew 5:7

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[0 : 00] Please take out your copy of God's Word, which I hope you have with you, and I hope that it's well read and treasured in your hearts. And turn with me to Matthew chapter 5 and verse 7.

Matthew chapter 5 verse 7. For the past month we've been considering together, as we learn from Jesus' teaching in what's most often called the Sermon on the Mount, what citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven look like.

The overarching question before us has been, what characterizes those who follow the King of the Kingdom?

Matthew chapter 4 verse 17. Matthew is presented to us the very beginning of Jesus' ministry and records for us. From that time, Jesus began to preach.

And he summarizes his preaching. Jesus saying, repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

And then we see at the beginning of Matthew chapter 5 a crowd gathering together.

[1 : 13] And Jesus, seeing the crowds, goes up onto a mountain. And he sits down and his disciples gather around him. And then Matthew records in verse 2, And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying.

So we've considered, and I've asserted to you, that his primary audience are these disciples. And certainly there are others in his hearing. And we'll see much later in the sermon, he gives some very stark warning to those in his hearing.

And I think it's right to understand that he's talking to those who are already citizens, those who were his disciples of this Kingdom. He's saying, this is what you will look like.

Jesus declares that the citizens of his Kingdom are blessed or flourishing, we've talked a bit about.

We have looked at the first four of these declarations of blessedness and seen that followers of Jesus Christ will be, verse 3, Those who recognize their spiritual poverty.

Those who see that they have nothing to offer God apart from the wealth that is found in Christ.

We've seen that those who mourn of their sinful state and the sinful state of the world around them, Who look at the world and see how very sin sick it is, are declared blessed.

[2 : 49] We have seen that those who are meek when wronged, people who don't seek retribution in their own cases, are blessed.

And we've seen that those who have a deep longing to be found righteous and to persist in righteousness, Are declared by Jesus to be blessed.

These people are declared blessed because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. They shall be comforted. They shall inherit the earth. And they shall be satisfied.

So join me now in considering the next of Jesus' declarations of blessedness in Matthew 5, verse 7. Before I read this short verse, let me remind you, beloved, And this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

Matthew 5, verse 7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

[4 : 03] So what does it mean to be merciful? Let's begin answering that question by stating that God is merciful.

God's mercy is his goodness, particularly where people are miserable or distressed.

Let me show you some examples. David says in 2 Samuel 24, 14, When Paul speaks of the fact that God comforts us in affliction in 2 Corinthians 1, verse 3, He calls God the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

The Greek word translated in today's text, merciful, Is the same used in the Septuagint, That ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament that I spent way too much time explaining to you last week.

The Septuagint uses the Greek word for the Hebrew word most common in describing God's character. The word used most often in the Hebrew language, speaking of God's character, is this word the same that we find in our text today in the Greek language.

[5 : 33] It's often translated as mercy, love, loving kindness, or steadfast love. In most places you read in the Old Testament, you see those English words or phrases, This is that same Hebrew word translated into Greek that we find in our text today.

In all of these cases, however, The idea passes beyond affection to compassion in action. It's expressed love. This loving kindness is not a feeling God has, but a way that he works. God's mercy is expressed, and it is expressed in helping those who are in need.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are a recipient, praise the Lord, of God's mercy. He has been merciful to you.

He is merciful and has expressed mercy to you. Apart from Christ, we find ourselves in an absolutely miserable state.

[6 : 44] We are separated from God and without any hope in this world. But because of God's loving kindness, because he is merciful, he has saved us in Christ.

Our salvation is this great expression of God's merciful character. On your bulletin today, the Thomas Watson quote, Which I do, by the way, not as a proof to anything that I say, but to connect you to our history.

We have a family that extends back through centuries. And I think it's helpful for us to see that we're not the only ones thinking in this way. Thomas Watson wrote, God is more willing to pardon than to punish.

Mercy does more multiply in him than sin in us. Praise the Lord. Mercy is his nature. So God is merciful as we're considering what it means for us to be merciful.

We need to also consider that Jesus Christ is merciful. Jesus is the great expression of God's mercy toward us.

[8 : 00] And he sets for us an example of being merciful. In Matthew chapter 9 and verse 27, Two blind men cry out to Jesus saying, Have mercy on us, son of David.

And we can read on that Jesus heals their blindness. John MacArthur, our contemporary pastor, in his commentary on this text, wrote, Jesus Christ was the most merciful human being who ever lived.

He reached out to heal the sick, restore the crippled, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and even life to the dead. He found prostitutes, tax collectors, the debauched and the drunken, and drew them into a circle of love and forgiveness.

Jesus wept with the sorrowing and gave compassion to the lonely. He took little children into his arms and blessed them. He was merciful to everyone.

He was mercy incarnate. God's very character made flesh that we might view him and learn from him how it is that we are also meant to be merciful.

[9 : 15] Beloved praise be to God that we, who were once the destitute and the outcast, we who were in great need, miserable and distressed, have been shown mercy in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter expresses this very sentiment in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3, where he writes, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And Paul tells us in Titus chapter 3 verse 5, that Jesus saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

So we have as our great example for what it means to be merciful, this God-man who came and not only served in the temporal, but served in the eternal, laying down his very life for the sake of ours. This is the very impetus. This is the foundation on which we build lives of mercy, that God in Christ was merciful to us.

[10 : 45] It is the reason that we turn and are merciful to others. But we are not naturally merciful. This is not a thing that comes of our own doing.

Before Paul's statement of that incredible truth in Titus 3.5, that we are saved according to Christ's own mercy, he writes in Titus 3 verse 3, For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days, listen to the opposite of mercy,

in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

This is the natural state of man. This is where we find ourselves apart from Christ, apart from the renewing work of God, we are not merciful.

This is true today, and it was most certainly true in Jesus' day. Both Roman and Jewish culture, mercy was equated, it was seen to be the same as weakness.

The two walked hand in hand together. To give you just a brief example from Roman culture, when a baby was born into a family, the father could decide whether or not the baby would live.

[12:19] Would give the baby a thumbs up or a thumbs down. And in many cases, if the baby didn't meet the father's standard, the baby would be immediately drowned. This was natural and normal in Roman culture.

Anybody in our country that wants to praise Rome, the Rome of yesteryear, oh, shake your heads at them. Slaves were put to death at the whim of the master.

Wives could be put to death at the whim of the husband. The culture was not merciful. To be merciful was to be weak. And Jewish culture, despite all of their commands given in the Old Testament, also expressed lots of unmerciful attitude.

Look quickly later in Matthew 5, verse 43 and following, where Jesus says, verse 43, you have heard that it was said, so this would be a common saying of the day, you have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

So here's the common teaching of the day. Be unmerciful. What is Jesus' response to this teaching? He says, with the authority that Christ could bring to bear, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, right?

[13:48] Be merciful so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven. For he makes his son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust, right?

Be merciful as your father in heaven is merciful. Prove yourself to be sons by expressing his character.

And he goes on, verses 46 and 47, for if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? How easy is it to love those who love us?

Do not even tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

It's of no benefit to you, but rather be merciful. Also, Matthew chapter 23 and verse 23.

[14:53] Jesus says, these are often called the woes. He speaks woes to the Pharisees, which are quite the opposite of these declarations of blessedness. He says, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe mint and dill and cummin.

They were down to the tithe and these very, very tiny things, these very particular things, which Jesus commends them for, but then says, and you have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness.

These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. So, the one of the ruling classes, religious Jews of the day, Jesus says to them, woe to you, you hypocrites, you care about stuff, so tiny.

He says later in chapter 23, that you strain out the gnat and you swallow the camel. You're neglecting the weighty matters of the law. There's another account that makes a similar point in Luke chapter 10.

Let me invite you to turn there with me. You can mark Matthew chapter 5. Let me invite you to turn there with me.

[16:18] Let me invite you to turn there with me. This is likely a story familiar to you. Luke chapter 10, beginning in verse 25. Jesus is making this very point.

This teaching would have just been astonishing to them because remember, this is a people who are not naturally merciful.

This is what they're talking about right now. The culture of the day. Not naturally merciful. Beginning in verse 25. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said to him, what is written in the law? How do you read it? And he answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

And Jesus said to him, you have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live. Right? So it's the right answer. One of the themes of the Sermon on the Mount is whole person righteousness. [17:26] So not merely the exterior of rightness, but the interior as well. And this man needed this to be addressed, this lawyer.

So verse 29, but he, desiring to justify himself, right? Not a man who's poor in spirit, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor? Jesus replied, you don't ask Jesus questions like this.

Jesus replied, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, this was a dangerous road to travel, who stripped him, and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now in the eyes of the religious elite, this would have made him dirty, unclean, right? They couldn't practice mercy, because they didn't want to defile themselves with the blood of this man.

So verse 31, now by chance, a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

[18:36] But a Samaritan, now understand, to Jesus' Jewish audience, found here in Luke chapter 10, the Samaritans were not a liked people, right?

There's a lot of misunderstanding, miscommunication. Look up what a Samaritan is, and you get all kinds of answers. But most likely, Samaritans were people that had intermarried during the Assyrian captivity, and were transplanted back into the Samaritan town.

So Jews perceived them as kind of half-breeds. When Israel was resettled, the second temple, the Samaritans wanted to help in the building of it, and they denied them the ability to, and so they had built their own temple, and had their own form of worship.

So there's a lot of butting heads between the two. So you need to see that this Samaritan is expressing that his neighbor is this Jewish man that's been beaten and left on the side of the road.

So verse 33, But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine disinfectant.

[19:52] Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day, he took out two denarii, two days' wages, and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.

Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? And he said, the lawyer said, the one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise.

So in very practical ways, express this attitude of mercifulness. Go and be merciful.

If you're to love the Lord your God, as the lawyer said, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself, this will get expressed. We are not naturally merciful, but we are called to be merciful. Those who have been made new in Jesus Christ will be.

[21:02] This will be the evidencing that we've been made new in Christ. We will be merciful. Those who have received mercy will express mercy.

And beloved, we do not do this perfectly. But we should desire to do it perfectly. We should be seeing the outworking of these first four beatitudes.

That we recognize we're poor in spirit. We're broken over our sin and the sin of the world. We find ourselves meek, submitting ourselves to the will of the Father. Not seeking retribution for our own rights to be defended.

We're hungering and we're thirsting for righteousness. And this begins to work itself out in things like mercy. Now, God has in his character incommunicable and communicable attributes.

That is to say, incommunicable attributes are characteristics that we as human beings cannot emulate. Praise God, that's true, right?

[22:09] That he's God and we're not. He's the creator. He created all things and we're the created. Some examples of this would be God's independence.

You may remember from a while ago, God's aseity. That he plugs into nothing, but everything plugs into him. He's self-existent.

We're not. We're dependent upon this creator God who has made us and sustains us. God is also unchangeable. It's one of his attributes.

It's unchangeableness, if you'll allow, or immutability. God does not change, but praise the Lord, we do, and hopefully, we're changing for the better.

But the communicable attributes are things, characteristics of God that we can, by grace, and should emulate. and merciful, loving, kind, is one of those attributes that, by the power that God works within us, we can emulate.

[23 : 16] Not with perfection, not the way he expresses it, but we can be pressing and working in that direction. We can serve as image bearers in the way that we're merciful to others.

Beloved, we show ourselves to be citizens of the kingdom of heaven by being merciful, by showing that we follow the king of this kingdom, by feeding the hungry, caring for the orphan and the widow, by comforting the bereaved, by loving the lonely and rejected, by forgiving the offender, by showing compassion to the destitute.

I am glad to be part of a church that as I think about what it means to be merciful, I can trace acts of mercy even in this week. Even mercy expressed toward me.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 3 and 4, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

I read that to you previously. But verse 4 goes on to say, Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

[24 : 43] You see, God comforts, God is merciful toward us in our affliction so that we can be comforters, be merciful to others in their affliction, in the same way.

So we're meant to be merciful, right? By God's grace, those of us who have been made new in Christ are meant to live this way. Jesus told a parable as a warning to those who are not merciful. And I want you to also turn there with me. So turn to Matthew chapter 18 and verse 23. The uninspired subtitle you'll probably see in your copy of God's word will be the unmerciful servant. It's a very apt title for this parable. Matthew chapter 18 beginning in verse 23 and following. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with the servants.

So you see very careful what he's saying here, right? He's saying this is what the kingdom of heaven is like. This is how it operates. As those who are either in that kingdom or those who are not but may be looking into it and desiring to be part of it, we should really listen to what's being said here by our Lord and Savior.

[26 : 20] Verse 24, when he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents. Now, this is a staggering sum of money.

You'll see people, they'll try to say this would be like millions and millions of dollars today, but it's not really an amount you could put a figure on. A talent was the largest unit in that modern in the day of currency, the largest unit, and 10,000 was the highest figure used in ancient accounting. So he's using the two very highest numbers he possibly could use in this case to say this was an astounding debt. This was a debt that was not going to be repaid.

Verse 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had and payment to be made.

So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, have patience with me and I will pay you everything. And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

[27 : 34] What an astounding thing. This unpayable debt. He deserved to be sold and to be punished until he could pay the debt. And this servant says there's not a chance I'll pay it back.

Have mercy on me. And he's forgiven the debt. Verse 28 But when the same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii.

And seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, pay what you owe. Now, this is comparatively a hundred denarii, comparatively a fraction of what he owed his master.

It's a fraction. A denarius being the common silver coin of the day, was equivalent to about a day's wage for a laborer. Kind of the typical blue collar wage of the day.

So I think it's important for us to note that this is still a great sum. This is three months wages. I think about three months wages. Man, that's a debt. That's a debt owed.

[28 : 36] Right? But it's relatively insignificant. It's relatively insignificant. Verse 29. So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, have patience with me and I will pay you.

He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servant saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

Then his master summoned him and said to him, you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you.

And in anger, his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. So here we see a man who has received astounding mercy, this offer of forgiveness of his debt, but he doesn't turn and offer the same.

[29 : 50] Jesus is saying this is what the kingdom of heaven could be compared to. We, owing an astounding unpayable infinite debt to God have seen by faith that debt canceled and the infinite righteousness of Christ credited to us and so we ought to then turn and offer the same kind of forgiveness to others.

Right? Little infinitesimal debts now owed us. We ought to be turning around to others and offering them an astounding amount of mercy. Beloved, it is wrong for the church not to be part of mercy ministries because we pay our taxes.

It is wrong for us to feel embittered towards those who take advantage of social welfare. We ought to go to them, right? Hearts recognizing that we have been forgiven, that we have taken advantage and offer great mercy.

to these people. This is the way we're meant to live as citizens of the kingdom of heaven. And so why does Jesus declare blessed these people, these merciful people?

And our text says, for they shall receive mercy. Those who have received mercy will be merciful and therefore will receive mercy.

[31 : 22] It's a great big mercy loop. In Matthew chapter 25, verse 31 and following, Jesus speaks of the final judgment and the basis for his judgment, as we will see, is mercy shown to others.

So join me there. I know there's a lot of text today. Matthew chapter 25.

Now hear me carefully as we read this. We are not saying that because we're merciful, we earn God's favor. We've been shown mercy and so we're merciful, right?

We're found in him. We're citizens of the kingdom and this is the evidence, right? This is the evidence that we've received the mercy of God and will fully and finally receive the mercy of God.

So do not get that wrong. No one is saying that we're saved by our works here. Listen to what Jesus says, verse 31 and following. When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

[32 : 35] Before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats and he will place the sheep on his right but the goats on his left.

So there's going to be this final judgment. There's going to be a separation and we want to be counted among the sheep. Those who are placed in the place of honor at the right of the glorious throne.

Verse 34 Then the king will say to those on his right, Come you who are blessed by 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 welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me.

I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. All things, all things that we can do. Verse 37 Then the righteous will answer him saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink?

[33 : 46] And when do we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you? And when do we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the king will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it to me.

I pray that you count yourself and that others who are examining your life count you among these blessed sheep. That we can say of ourselves and that people who are around us looking at our lives or inviting into our lives can say, Merciful, yes, merciful, you are merciful.

As God's been merciful to you, you are merciful. this working is the evidence of your salvation, that you belong to the kingdom of heaven.

I pray that you are not counted amongst the goats. Verse 41, then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry and you gave me no food. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

[35 : 08] Then they also will answer saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you? Then you will answer them saying, truly I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. There's a weighty thing to consider here, to really ask ourselves, and again, those around us, those who are following the way of Christ, those who are citizens of the kingdom, am I merciful?

Does this characterize my life? Some of you may know about the mercy of God, but have yet to experience the mercy of God, have yet to turn to Christ by faith.

And we have a beautiful promise in closing in James 2, verse 13. James writes, for judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.

Hear that again. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy, triumphs over judgment.

[36 : 26] So Jesus says, blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Let's pray together.