

## BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL I

### Message 7

Scripture: Psalm 136

INTRO: We have been making our way through the beatitudes section of the sermon on the Mount. By way of introduction to this fifth beatitude, let me explain a little of the inner workings of man, or the internal nature of man. This is called psychology by the secular world today. But when the secular world speaks of psychology, it speaks of the study of the behaviorism of man. But a study of the behaviorism of man involves more than psychology. You see, true biblical psychology is the study of the soul. The word 'psychee' is the word for soul and that is the root of the word 'psychology.' But a study of the behaviorism of man involves the body, the soul and the spirit of man.

The Psalmist has said that man is fearfully and wonderfully made. The part of man we understand best is the physical part of man, and from that alone we would agree with the Psalmist. But man is made up of three parts; body, soul and spirit. So let me take a little time to show you a biblical modal of man. So let us go to 1 Thessalonians 5 (read 23). You see, man is made up of three major components; body, soul and spirit. (Use box to show this.) It is my view that the OT tabernacle gives us a biblical picture of the nature of man. We do not have time to discuss that this morning.

Now, these beatitudes in Matthew 5 deal mainly with character. Character is an inner development. As I see it, the first five beatitudes deal with the spirit part of man. The sixth deals with a major part of the soul. We will look at that in the future. Internally we have feelings and emotions and moods and so on. Being poor in spirit is internal; mourning is internal; meekness is internal; hungering and thirsting for righteousness is internal. Being merciful is internal. None of those are physical developments; rather, as I see it, they deal with the spirit part of man.

Feelings are generated by both physical and spiritual information or data. In the physical realm they are things we

touch, see, hear, smell, or taste. I believe these are pictured for us in the OT tabernacle by the five outer pillars. Then we sometimes refer to man as having a sixth sense. It is my view that what we refer to as a sixth sense, is that information we take in through the spirit part of man. The spirit part of man may be affected by four spiritual sources. These are the spirits of animals, human spirits, demonic spirits or the Holy Spirit. I believe these are pictured in the OT tabernacle by the four inner pillars. Today the connection between man's spirit and animal spirits and demons is experiencing phenomenal growth in our so called civilized world.

Now the input of data into man, whether from the physical or spiritual realms, causes feelings. These feelings cause neurological reactions. Those reactions cause a lot of things to happen in the body which in turn cause excitatory or inhibitory neurotransmitters. So, the intake of data from either the physical realm, or the spiritual realm can greatly affect us as to our feelings, emotions, moods or states of mind.

As I see it, an emotion is caused by feelings. One definition I read of an emotion said an emotion is, and I quote, "a natural instinctive state of mind deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationship to others." It seems our emotions are more or less controlled by the information that enters us via the five senses, or data put in from the spiritual realm. Now, we may encourage those emotions that are developed by this incoming data or we may fight them by trying to control our emotions. When an emotion is prolonged, as I see it, it becomes a mood. That mood is a state of mind, and there are many different states of mind we experience in life.

Now as I see it, the emotions are developed in the spirit part of man. For example, Pharoah, in the days of Joseph had a dream and when he awoke he was troubled. Genesis 41:8 says his spirit was troubled. Exodus 6:9 speaks of the children of Israel experiencing *anguish of spirit* because of their heavy bondage. Numbers 5:14 speaks of the *spirit of jealousy*. You see, the NT speaks of sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. Jealousy and pride and such things are sins of the spirit. Then in 1 Samuel 1:15 Hannah says, "I am a woman of *sorrowful spirt*". In Luke

1:47 Mary says, "my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior". Paul, in 1 Corinthians 16:18 speaks of being refreshed in his spirit.

So the very first beatitude said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." There we have a matter related to the inner workings of man, and here the spirit part of man. The second beatitude said, "Blessed are those who mourn." Now there is a sorrowful mood, created by being poor in spirit. Then it said, "Blessed are the meek." Meekness is the description of a certain state of the human spirit. So 1 Peter 3:4 speaks of a meek and quiet or gentle spirit. You can see that this would affect one's state of mind.

Another beatitude spoke of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. You see, such inner states as being hungry and thirsty for righteousness cause man, who is otherwise sinful, to crave or desire to be able to live right. So this man is called blessed. That is a blessed state. It is totally contrary to man's natural state. Our inner state, in its natural state, wants to produce sin. The inner state of a truly born again Christian wants to produce righteousness. So the Sermon on the Mount later says that people are known by their fruits, that is, by their outward actions.

Our beatitude this morning is regarding the merciful. I would relate that to the spirit of man which in turn creates a state of mind. This man is merciful.

## V. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

### A. The Character Of The Merciful

And so we come now to the fifth beatitude which says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And we first want to consider the character of this man. If we translated these words literally it would read, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be mercied." Those who come to hunger and thirst for righteousness until they are content with nothing else, will become merciful.

Now, in my understanding, mercy is an emotion. When we come into certain circumstances or obtain certain kinds of information, it causes a feeling, and that feeling causes

mercy to well up inside normal people. I would define mercy like this, "Mercy is that feeling of pity or compassion that arises when we see someone in need and which causes us to desire to fill that need or alleviate that suffering."

Now I want to give you some information that will cause you to experience feelings of mercy. I have shown you a picture in the past that I want to draw for you in your minds with words. The picture that will emerge will give you data which will cause mercy to well up inside of you. It is the Pulitzer winning picture of about a seven or eight year old black boy who is on his haunches and elbows on a roadway strewn with debris. He is very skinny. His head is hanging down, almost touching the ground, and he is about to fall over from weakness. Behind him, about ten feet or so is a huge crooked necked, big beaked vulture, waiting patiently to start gorging itself on this child as soon as the child falls over. This child has made it to about one kilometer from a United Nations food camp, but has run out of energy to go on. When we see a picture like this it causes all kinds of feelings of mercy to well up in any normal person.

No one knows what happened to the child, but we do know what happened to the man who took the picture. He committed suicide three months later. And why did this man commit suicide? I suspect it was probably mercy overload. He saw such incredible needs that he could do nothing about that it seemed hopeless, and he ended his own life. It would take a very hardened sinner not to want to stretch out tender arms and hands and have tender feet carry this boy the rest of the way to the United Nations food camp. This picture does amazing things to any normal heart. And those feeling of compassion one feels for a child in such deep need are called 'mercy'.

#### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEELINGS OF MERCY AND SHOWING MERCY

Now, let me explain that one may be called merciful because one has feelings of mercy for another, or one may be called merciful because one has those feelings and then one extends mercy to the one in need. For example, God had such great feelings of mercy for man that He gave His only begotten Son for man. But God cannot extend that mercy to

most of those for whom His Son died because they fail to meet the conditions for it. In order for God to extend that mercy to man, man has to become poor in spirit and mourn his sinful condition, as these beatitudes have shown us.

You see, our beatitude says, "Blessed are the merciful." One may be called merciful because one has these feelings of mercy, and one may be called merciful because one shows mercy. To have the sensations of mercy is one thing. To extend mercy or to show mercy to someone is another. When we extend mercy to one in need, we help them with that which they need. That means the meeting of that need comes to the needy by grace. The extension of mercy is by grace.

For example, when God sees the world, the world in its lost condition looks to God like this boy I just described for you, looks to us. God sees us ready to keel over, and the flames of hell lapping at our feet and Satan doing everything he can to get us to fall into the flames. God had great feelings of mercy for the whole world when He gave His only Son on man's behalf. And in a sense God showed mercy to the whole world when He paid for man's sin in the price of His Son's own blood. But God cannot extend that mercy to man unless man meets the conditions. Even though Jesus Christ died for man, man is still on the way to hell. But when man meets God's conditions, and he humbles himself and repents and believes in God's Word, then God extends His mercy to man and saves him. So, God is merciful both before mercy is extended and when mercy is extended.

THE FLOW OF MERCY AS RELATED TO LOVE, JUSTICE. TRUTH and Grace

So, let us look at mercy as related to such words as love and justice, truth and grace. Mercy is the root feeling or sensation that causes one to act on behalf of the welfare of another who is in need. But to feel mercy and to extend mercy are two different things. One may feel mercy for a drunk, but one may not be able to extend mercy. If I seek to extend mercy by giving him money to buy lunch as he claims he wants, he may simply buy more liquor. In that case my mercy is unjust. It is not based in truth or justice. The outcome is not good. So before one shows mercy, there must be good ground for doing that.

God felt mercy for the whole world, but He cannot extend that mercy to the whole world unconditionally. He had mercy on the whole world by providing a way for man to deal with his sins. But He only extends mercy when man repents, confesses and believes.

When man repents before God, and God extends his mercy, extending mercy means He saves them, because salvation is sinful man's need. And that salvation comes to them by grace. And God extends His grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5).

Here is the progression as I see it. First there is mercy. Mercy prompts love to act. Mercy lies at the root of love. When I feel mercy or pity for another, that feeling wants to be satisfied or alleviated. So, it calls on agaptee love to satisfy or alleviate those feelings of mercy. But love cannot satisfy those feelings of mercy unless it is just or right to do so. So it must look at the truth of the whole matter. And when it is determined that it is right to do so, the act of mercy comes by grace; which means it is undeserved or unearned.

But, the extension of mercy must be just or right. For example, there are people who have learned how to draw out man's feelings of mercy. With this ability they cause people to give to some very good sounding cause, only to fill their own pockets with the money. There are those who have learned to use man's feelings of mercy to get rich from them. So it behooves the one who extends mercy to check if what he is giving to, is in fact what he has been told it is. So, you see, that godly mercy must be just. It must be based in truth.

So, feelings of compassion call for agaptee love to do something to satisfy those feelings. Agaptee love is not a feeling. It is an action taken for the benefit of the one for whom one has feelings of compassion, which prompts one to alleviate the plight of that one in need. And when one alleviates that plight, that is love, agaptee love. But before agaptee love can act, it must check to see if alleviating that plight is based in truth, or if that action is right.

So, God pitied, or had feelings of compassion for the whole world, all of lost mankind. But if God wanted to extend mercy and save man from his sins He had to do it in a just way. God did this by paying for man's sins with the

life of His only Son on sinful man's behalf. This is tremendously great love. But, both giving His Son and forgiving sin upon repentance are just. It is right. There is justice in the Gospel. If God will forgive a sin, that sin must be fully paid for. That is justice. But, that forgiveness is conditioned on repentance and faith.

Now, if we come to where we feel mercy for a person, that does not mean it is right to extend mercy. When mercy is extended, it must have a just and right cause. For example, God may feel great pity for a proud man, but He will not extend mercy unless that man humbles himself. Go to Mark 10 for an example (read 17-22). Jesus loved this man, but He could do nothing for him because he loved his riches more than righteousness.

So, the conclusion to this point is that though mercy is felt, it can only rightly be extended when it is just, or right to do so. And if one cannot rightfully extend mercy, but one has feelings of mercy, one is still merciful. God cannot extend mercy to millions of people for whom He has great compassion because they refuse to meet the conditions. They are stiff necked and proud and mercy cannot be extended until that changes, but God is still merciful.

Let me show you something further about man's inner workings. You may not find it too palatable, but it is helpful to understand this from a biblical point of view. Let us go to Matthew 20 (read 29-31). These men asked Jesus to have mercy on them. So, what does that mean? Well, we already have seen that to have feelings of mercy and to extend mercy are two different things. So when they asked for mercy, they were asking the Lord to do what mercy causes one to want to do for someone whom one pities; and in this case it was to give them sight.

Now look at verses 32-34. Notice that when Jesus had mercy on them, or when He extended mercy, it says He had compassion on them. Here is another very important word related to mercy. This word 'compassion' is the word 'splanknizomai' and this word comes from the word 'splanknon'. Now, just what is that? Well, the word 'splanknon' is the Greek word for bowels. In the Bible, the mind is spoken of as the heart. We will see that in another beatitude. The heart and the mind are connected. Put a man under a great deal of mental stress and it will affect his heart. But the bowels are connected to the

emotions of compassion or mercy. If someone is put under a great deal of emotional stress, where does it affect him? In the bowels.

So, let me show you something else now. Go to 1 John 3 (read 17). The NKJV says, 'whoever shuts up his heart.' The KJV is better and more literal, it says, 'whoever' shuts up his bowels of compassion.' Now, in the KJV you will notice that the word 'compassion' is italicized. That means it is not in the original.

So go to Philemon (7, 12, 20 heart = bowels). Now go to Colossians 3 (read 12). The NKJV says we are to put on 'tender mercies'. The KJV says more accurately, "put on bowels of mercies." There mercy and bowels are connected. And both have to do with feelings or emotions of compassion. When you study the original Scriptures, you will find this kind of psychology consistently the same in both the Old and New Testaments.

So, with that background to our word 'mercy' let us now go on to see what kind of mercy our text is talking about. Earlier I tried to illustrate mercy for you by describing the boy that came within one kilometer of help before he succumbed to weakness. He is on his haunches and elbows and is within one kilometer of food. He is very skinny. His head is hanging down almost touching the ground, and he is about to keel over from starvation. Behind him, about ten feet or so is a huge crooked necked, big beaked vulture, waiting patiently for him to fall over. Then this vulture will gorge himself.

Now I have proposes to you that spiritually speaking, that is what a lost sinner looks like to God. That is how hopeless we look. That may even be the picture of many a sin sick Christian. And Satan sits by just waiting to fly to the prey. And inside God well up these tremendous feelings of compassion. So one of the Psalms says over and over, 'for His mercy endures forever.' And as I see it, God's mercy arouses His agapee love; and this love sends strong messages to God to do something for such lost sinners. But agape love is based on truth and justice. And it must go there to see if it is right to do something. And when the sinner repents and trusts Christ, mercy and truth meet and the Lord saves us. So Psalm 85:10 says, "Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed." When mercy and truth meet on a certain situation, then love can go to work.



It is an interesting thing that mercy is an attribute of God Almighty. Ephesians 2:4 says God is rich in mercy. One of the attributes of God Almighty is that He is a God of mercy. When we come to this word mercy, we have something that God knows all about by Personal experience. He is full of mercy. He has feelings of compassion for man!

But, I must make another point. Because a person is merciful does not mean such a person may not get angry at another or withhold the extension of mercy. God's mercy for certain people runs out. God's mercy ran out for man in Noah's day, and He drowned them all except for eight people. God's mercy ran out for the sons of Korah. God's mercy ran out for Nineveh. God's mercy ran out for Judas. Some day God's mercy will run out for most of mankind in the tribulation and He will pour out His wrath on mankind.

Consider the Lord Jesus. He was the perfect Man. He was meek. He was merciful. But Mark 3:5 says, "So when He had looked around at them with anger..." He got angry with the religious leaders of the day. If you read Matthew 23, you will see some of the most scathing denunciations uttered in Scripture to man, and it was done by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that at the religious leaders of the day. Because God and Jesus are very, very merciful, we must not get the idea that justice and righteousness and holiness are overlooked by mercy.

Now, what is it that makes God merciful towards sinful man? It is man's pitiable condition. While man walks in sinfulness and pride; God recognizes man's true condition. And, I ask, what is it that has brought the blessed man to a state of being merciful? Well, he has seen his own spiritual bankruptcy; his own utterly hopeless condition in sin, which in turn has caused him to mourn. And this brings him to humility and repentance towards God and he has found forgiveness and cleansing. And this causes him to become meek. No longer does he walk in his sinful, blind, pride. And when he became meek, he became hungry and thirsty for righteousness, having found himself incapable of doing right in his own power. And having been thus reduced to being entirely dependent on God even to be able to live right, he has now become merciful towards others. He knows the plight they are in.

You see, being merciful, describes how we feel towards others when we pity them. The reason the blessed man of our beatitude feels mercy towards others is because, like

God, he now sees others in their true predicament. When a saved man sees the lost living as though there will be no judgment and no hell, he now sees him through the eyes of God. When he sees those who name the name of Christ who are not living right, and he recognizes that they are living in the flesh and have become tools of demons, he can see the real predicament of such a person and he may well feel pity for them. He may not be able to extend mercy because there is no humility or repentance there, or not much desire for truth, but he can feel pity for them.

#### NOT A NATURAL TRAIT

Now I have said that these beatitudes are not something any person has by nature. But we may argue this one. One might say, "Oh, I have seen many people who are merciful. There are people who give their whole life to help the underprivileged." That is true. There are even professing Christian missionaries who are there simply because they feel sorry for certain people. It is this kind of missionary that leads to the social gospel. But it may be a humanistic mercy.

There are many parents that deal with their children with humanistic mercy. By nature we have feelings of compassion for our own children. That is well in order. But we are easily biased towards our own children and we may fail to do that which is best for them. Parents easily feel sorry for little Johnny. Poor little Johnny. He is so cute. Watch little Johnny play with toys. "Mine!" "Mine!" And there is the parent who says, "He didn't mean to do something bad." And they let little Johnny get away with things, and they pamper him. And then when little Johnny grows up, he becomes bad Johnny, and he brings shame to his mother.

But the mercy we are talking about here is mercy that is created by looking at others from God's perspective. This mercy operates in line with justice and truth. It is not sentimental. It is godly and will see through little Johnny, and it will discipline him in time.

You see, if the world was to describe a merciful person, how would they describe them? Would they not say this kind of person is very tolerant? Would they not feel that mercy is more important than justice and truth? Would they not see the merciful person as a peacekeeper rather than a

peacemaker? But, the truly, biblically, merciful man is no sentimental, slushy, overly tolerant kind of person.

So, what is the merciful man of our text? Well, we have to see him in the context. This merciful man was first poor in spirit. He found himself bankrupt in righteousness and full of sin. He found himself so far from like Christ that it caused him to mourn. And I propose this caused him to repent and believe which in turn brought about meekness.

And when this man became meek, he became hungry and thirsty for righteousness. And the man who becomes truly hungry and thirsty for righteousness will be filled with righteousness. And not only that, but he will become hungry and thirsty again and again, and he was filled again and again. And now, in this state he comes to see the lost in their lost condition. Though they are very wicked, he may feel great compassion for them. And as he grows he will even see many Christians in their carnality. And if he has already been through that stage as well, mercy may well be aroused in him at the plight of the carnal Christian. This kind of mercy is not natural to man.

CONCL: Well, we conclude this message. What is mercy? Mercy is those feelings of compassion for the less fortunate. Mercy calls on love to do something for the one in need. Love, in turn, must check to see if it is just to do something for the one in need. If so, it will do what is needed. When that is done, that is done by grace, that is it cannot be earned. It is given.

Who are the merciful? They are those who feel compassion for the lost because they have been there themselves. They even feel compassion for many who name the name of Christ, but are carnal because no one has taught them the way of the cross. But, on the other hand, his mercy does not overrule justice and righteousness and holiness. It is kept in balance with other important truths.

And how does one become merciful? It all begins with becoming truly poor in spirit and mourning one's own sinful condition. Then, when such a person repents and turns to Christ in faith, having been greatly humbled, he becomes meek. This in turn creates within him a deep hunger for righteousness. And when he

begins to be filled with righteousness, he becomes truly merciful. Blessed are the merciful.