

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL II

Message 8

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

INTRO: We have come in these beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount to the fifth beatitude. May I remind us that we have come once more to a most sacred part of Christ's teaching. It is the very first part of Christ's very first extended discourse, the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. I have mentioned that there are those who believe this sermon was not meant for the Church. There are those who do not see that there is any amount of the Gospels that was intended for the Church. The longer I go, the more I find that relates to the Church. I believe that when you come to Matthew 13, those parables are prophetic of the Church age. It is not much later, chapter 16, that Christ directly mentioned the Church.

As I see it, the entrance into the kingdom God prepared from the foundations of the world, the millennial kingdom, will be entered precisely the same way as entrance into the kingdom ruled from heaven today. The very first thing that must happen to anyone entering the kingdom, whether in the Church age or in the tribulation for entrance into the millennial age is to become poor in spirit. There must come a mourning over one's sinfulness. One must come to where the Apostle Peter came when He and Christ were in the same fishing vessel together. Peter came to recognize who Jesus was and he said, "Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man."

And when one has found himself to be exceedingly sinful, and one has mourned over one's lack of Christlikeness, repentance and a receiving of Christ as the Savior must take place. If this truly happens a degree of meekness without doubt will take place. And when that happens there will come a hunger and thirst for righteousness. One of the greatest lacks of the modern church is a deep hunger and thirst for righteousness. And when that happens, one will become merciful to some degree. It cannot be otherwise. If it is, no true salvation has occurred.

Mercy, in my understanding, is a feeling. It 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. It is my view that the mercy spoken of here is for the lost or Christians who do not understand the need for holiness and righteousness and so on. It is the mercy God has for such people.

Let me add one more introductory thought on mercy in the world by John MacArthur: He says, "A popular Roman philosopher called mercy 'the disease of the soul.' It was the supreme sign of weakness. Mercy was a sign that you did not have what it takes to be a real man and especially a real Roman. The Romans glorified manly courage, strict justice, firm discipline, and, above all, absolute power. They looked down on mercy, because mercy to them was weakness, and weakness was despised above all other human limitations.

During much of Roman history, a father had the right of *patria opitestas*, of deciding whether or not his newborn child would live or die. As the infant was held up for him to see, the father would turn his thumb up if he wanted the child to live, down if he wanted it to die. If his thumb turned down the child was immediately drowned. Citizens had the same life-or-death power over slaves. At any time and for any reason they could kill and bury a slave, with no fear of arrest or reprisal. Husbands could even have their wives put to death on the least provocation. Today abortion reflects the same merciless attitude. A society that despises mercy is a society that glorifies brutality", end quote.

So, note the great contrast of Rome, and much of mankind, to the God of the Scriptures. God Almighty is a God of mercy. His mercy endures forever. And so, having looked, in our last message, at the character of the merciful; we now want to consider the promise to the merciful.

B. The Promise To The Merciful

Well, in the last message we looked at the character of the merciful man. This morning we want to consider the promise to the merciful. Our text says, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive or obtain mercy." I mentioned last message that it literally reads that the merciful will be mercied. As you can see I fabricated a verb we don't have in English. But we must ask these questions. First, who is it that will have mercy on merciful? And second, why will mercy be had on the merciful? And third, is mercy extended to the merciful

because they are merciful? And last, when will mercy be extended to the merciful?

-Who is it that has mercy on the merciful?

Well, let us seek to answer the first question, "Who is it that will have mercy on the merciful?" Do people become merciful to the person who is merciful? Is that what is meant here? Answer? That may happen from time to time, but generally that is not true. John MacArthur says, "Yet many people have interpreted this beatitude in another way that is just as selfish and humanistic: they maintain that our being merciful causes those around us, especially those to whom we show mercy, to be merciful to us. Mercy given will mean mercy received. For such people, mercy is shown to others purely in an effort toward self-seeking" end quote.

I might add that if we speak of humanistic mercy, some may have mercy on the merciful; but not if we are talking about divine mercy. Let me show you that. See, in these beatitudes here is the progression: Poor in spirit; mourning; meekness; hunger and thirst for righteousness; merciful; pure in heart, and after that what happens? Persecution! Do the merciful receive mercy from those to whom they have shown mercy? John MacArthur says, "The more Jesus showed mercy, the more He showed up the unmercifulness of the Jewish religious leaders. The more He showed mercy, the more they were determined to put Him out of the way."

Let me show you that in this way. Christ was incredibly merciful to sinful mankind. He left the splendor of heaven, emptied Himself of His glory, made Himself of no reputation; took the form of a slave; and came in the likeness of men. He did it for man. His mercy for man knew no bounds, and I ask you, what did man do to Him? Well, the same passage I alluded to says, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. And I ask, who crucified Him? The very same people He had shown great mercy to!

So, who has mercy on the merciful? It is, without doubt, God who has mercy on the merciful. It may be true that some people become merciful to one who is merciful to

them, but that is not nearly always the case. Blessed are the merciful because God will have mercy on them. John MacArthur says, "The fifth beatitude does not teach that mercy to men brings mercy from men, but that mercy to men brings mercy from God."

-Why does God have mercy on the merciful?

Go with me first to a greatly troubling passage in Romans 9 (read 14-18). Does this passage teach that God has mercy on the elect few that He chose in eternity past, and the un-elect He condemns to hell? Does He indiscriminately have mercy on some but not on others? There is a branch of Christianity that teaches that God chose a few out of all mankind, and He will cause them to believe in Him and the rest that He did not choose, He will condemn to hell. That, in my view, is exactly what the Bible does not teach.

So, on whom does He will to have mercy? Well, the Bible is quite clear on this. We go to Exodus 20 (read 4-6). This passage lists the ten commandments. In this commandment God says, "You shall have no other gods before Me." Well, that is what Pharaoh did. And it was by God's choice not to have mercy on such idolaters. It would have been wrong to have mercy on Pharaoh. Pharaoh was proud beyond description. But God says in verse 6, He will show mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments. That is precisely the kind of person we have in our beatitude.

Why did God not have mercy on Pharaoh? Why did He harden Pharaoh's heart? Because Pharaoh knew the truth and would not respond to it. He hated the truth. He was proud beyond description. The very circumstances that should have softened and humbled him made him more proud. If Pharaoh had humbled himself, God would have had mercy on him and saved him.

Now turn to Luke 1. Mary, who will become the mother of the Messiah, had just been informed by the angel, Gabriel, that she would bear the Messiah. So, look at what she says in 46-50 (read). Mary, the mother of Jesus recognized what triggered God's mercy. It is not something that comes and happens without reason. To whom God will show mercy is

established on the basis of His firm character. Mary says, "His mercy is on those who fear Him." And in the same breath she tells us what turns God to brass for she says, "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." That is why He hardened Pharoah. Yes, God will have mercy on whom He wills to have mercy and He wills to have mercy on those who fear Him and are humble; those who become poor in spirit.

So look at Romans 9:16 (read). What does this mean? Well, it teaches us that God's mercy is not triggered by self will or human efforts. No part of salvation is by works or human effort. It is all of grace. And the proud, or idolaters have no part of God's mercy. So if God's mercy is extended to man on the basis of man's response to Him in fear and faith and love. That is precisely what we have in the beatitudes.

Now let me answer more fully why God has mercy on the merciful. I want to show you what kind of person the truly merciful person is and why God has mercy on him. Those who become merciful in the Biblical sense of our beatitude first of all respond to truth in the right way. You see, this merciful person first became poor in spirit. That never happened to Pharaoh. If it had, he would have mourned his sin.

Now those who become merciful are a very rare kind of person. You see, he first of all has become poor in spirit. What that means is that this man was confronted with the truth about his sinful state. And he came to mourn his sinful condition. He was fully honest about his sinful condition and mourned it. Jesus said in John 16:7-11, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

So, this blessed man, somewhere in life came under great conviction of sin. He was honest. He recognized his

sinfulness and mourned. And then he repented of his sins and trusted Christ for salvation. That is how a man of the world becomes meek, truly meek. And all of this right from the start, never happened in Pharaoh. Why not? Because of his pride.

So, go to John 3 (read 16-21). Here is condemnation on all mankind. Light has come into the world and shown us that we are sinners. Keep your finger at John 3 and go to Ephesians 5 (read 8-13). You see, this blessed man of Matthew 5 was once darkness. But he became a child of light. So verse 13 says that all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light. This man was exposed as to his own inner depravity. You see, anything that shows us up for what we truly are is light light exposes us for what we are.

Now go back to John 3. Verse 19 says that men love darkness rather than light. And the reason men love darkness is because their deeds are evil. And verse 20 says that those who practice evil hate the light. That is how this blessed man was at one time. He did not want his deeds exposed. Oh how we hate exposure when we live in sin. We fight exposure. And then this man thought it all over, and he decided to do the truth. He recognized the truth and he desired the truth and he became poor in spirit. And when he became poor in spirit he began to mourn his inner sinful condition.

And it is here somewhere, that he bent his stiff neck, and surrendered to the will of God and repented and confessed his sins and came to trust in the Lord. And when he had become poor in spirit and had mourned and made his great decision to deny self and go God's way and he had repented and confessed his sins and trusted in the Lord, he became meek. Pride had been dealt with.

And now that he has responded to the light, now he loves the light! He is a changed man! He has come from darkness to light. He no longer minds if his deeds are exposed. He wants to change. And now that he loves the light, he has a great desire to know what is right and what is wrong. And this man, that later becomes merciful, now only wants to

live right. Show him what is right, and he will do it. Show him where he is wrong, and he will humbly confess it. This man now hungers and thirsts for righteousness. He wants to live right.

And now his character has developed mercifulness. And why does God have more and more mercy on him? Because when he is confronted with truth and it exposes him he immediately becomes poor in spirit and mourns his sin, and repents and turns from it and becomes meek again. And then he hungers for more and more truth and responds to more and more truth, and thus God is merciful to him again and again. Why does God have mercy on the merciful? Because they respond to truth and become poor in spirit, mourn their sinfulness; become meek and hunger and thirst for righteousness and thus become merciful. That is why God has mercy on them. It goes all the way back to loving truth.

So, why does God have mercy on the merciful? Because they have been confronted with the truth. They have embraced the truth about themselves and have become poor in spirit, or humble and have mourned their own depravity. They have become meek and now hunger and thirst for righteousness. And when they are filled with righteousness, they become merciful. That is why God has mercy on them again and again.

-Is mercy extended to the merciful because they are merciful?

And now for our third question: Is mercy extended to the merciful because they are merciful? Is that how it works? Let me give you something from D Martyn Lloyd Jones here. He says, "The real problem, however, in this Beatitude is raised by the promise, 'for they shall obtain mercy'; and perhaps there is no other Beatitude that has been misunderstood quite so frequently as this one. For there are people who would interpret like this. They say, 'If I am merciful towards others, God will be merciful towards me; if I forgive, I shall be forgiven. The condition of being forgiven is that I forgive...'"

He then gives the parable of the man who was forgiven much, in Matthew 18, but who in turn would not forgive his fellow man. And Jones says, "Here again people at once begin to say, "Well; does not that clearly teach that I am forgiven by God only as I forgive others and to the extent that I forgive others?" To this he says, "It is amazing to me that anybody could ever arrive at such an interpretation, and that for two reasons."

Jones gives two reasons why that reasoning is wrong. He says, "First, if you and I were to be judged strictly on those terms, it is very certain that not one of us would be forgiven and not one of us would ever see heaven. If the passage is to be interpreted in the strictly legal manner forgiveness is impossible. It is amazing that people can think like that, not realizing they are condemning themselves as they do so."

Then he says, "The second reason is still more striking. If that is the interpretation of this Beatitude and the parallel passages, then we must cancel the whole doctrine of grace from the New Testament. We must never again say that we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; we must never read those glorious passages which tell us that 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us', even 'when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God', or 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself'. They must all go; they are all nonsense; and they are all untrue."

He then says, "When we apply this to the statement before us, the explanation is perfectly simple. Our Lord is really saying that I am only truly forgiven when I am truly repentant. To be truly repentant means that I realize I deserve nothing but punishment, and that if I am forgiven it is to be attributed entirely to the love of God and to His mercy and grace, and to nothing else at all. But I go further; it means this. If I am truly repentant and realize my position before God, and realize that I am only forgiven in that way, then of necessity I shall forgive those who trespass against me."

Now I had a very difficult time thinking through all of Jones' reasoning. But what I certainly agree that God is not merciful to us because we are merciful. We could say, "I will be merciful to others, and then God will have to be merciful to me. I will forgive others, and then others and then God will have to forgive me." But does it work like that? Are we forgiven by God because we forgive others? And this is the difficult question our text raises.

So, let me ask this question: Can we decide that we will have feelings of compassion for someone who has wronged us? No! That is the trouble with feelings. We cannot simply decide to have feelings of compassion, and there they are. Try to be merciful to people you have no mercy for. Now one can extend mercy by outward actions even when there are no feelings of mercy within. But that is not true mercy from within.

So, how does one become merciful? Take Pharaoh of Moses' day. What does it take to make such a man merciful? Take the Roman of Paul's day who had been taught to be merciless. When he saw his own child born and he gave it a thumbs down, what does it take to make a man like that merciful? Take the German of the 1940's. What does it take to make such people merciful. My own German grandfather had a hard time concealing his pleasure when Hitler was winning. What does it take to make ISIS, the beheaders, merciful? What does it take?

Can such people just decide he will become merciful and feelings of compassion will well up in him? No, let me tell you what will make them merciful. Such men must first be reduced by the truth until they become poor in spirit. He has to be reduced to nothing. He has to see himself as bankrupt in righteousness before God and fully deserving of hell. He must be brought to mourn his sinfulness. When that happens he will repent and turn to God. He will then become meek, which is so unlike the character of such men as to make it seem impossible, and then he must begin to hunger and thirst for righteousness and be filled with it. And then he will become merciful. And it is on such a

persons, such reduced persons, that God has mercy. He does not have mercy on someone because they are merciful. He has mercy on them because they respond to truth and then, in the process of salvation, in the process of humbling they become merciful.

Now, here is the progression for those who are already Christians. God wants to conform every Christian to the image of His Son. Wherever and whenever He can, He brings truth to bear on some area in the Christian's life. And when He brings truth to bear on the Christian's life, and the Christian acknowledges that truth and deals with it, that is to become poor in spirit. And then he mourns his sinful inner condition. This brings about sincere repentance, and this in turn causes a hunger and thirst for righteousness. And this great hunger and thirst for righteousness now causes this person to become merciful. And that is why God has mercy on this person again and again. And as that happens, that mercy grows and continues to grow.

Is mercy extended to the merciful because they are merciful? No, mercy is extended to those who respond positively to the truth and become poor in spirit; they mourn their sinfulness and repent and turn to God and thus become meek. And now they hunger and thirst for righteousness and in pursuing righteousness they become merciful. It is to those God extends mercy!

-When will God have mercy on the merciful?

So we have answered who will have mercy on the merciful. It is my view that it is speaking of God. And second, we have answered why God has mercy on the merciful. And now, for our last question, let me ask; when will God have mercy on the merciful? I propose to you that God will have mercy on them again and again as they grow spiritually. Listen to Hebrews 4:6, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

What do we obtain when we obtain mercy? Well, look at the verse 5 (read). The High Priest spoken of here is Jesus

Christ. And it says that He is not a High Priest that cannot sympathize with our weaknesses. The word 'sympathize' here is *sumpathew*. In the KJV it says He is not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. The original word is *sumpatheo*, which means 'to suffer with'. He suffers with or sympathizes with us. Why? Because He was a human and suffered all the things we suffer.

But now notice that it says we are to come boldly to the throne of grace. That is the throne from which grace proceeds. It is the throne of the source of grace. And why are we to come to this throne? To obtain mercy! It is at the throne of grace God's feelings of compassions are aroused towards us. And when His feelings of compassion are aroused towards us, we find grace to help in time of need. And what is this grace? Whatever it is we need at that time to get saved or live right, after we are saved. It is called grace because it comes by grace, that is, it comes without earning it. And I ask, when are we as Christians in need? Answer? Again, and again and again. So when can we find this mercy at the throne of grace? Again and again and again. When does God have mercy on the merciful? Again and again.

But I propose to you that there is a day coming when we will cry out for mercy beyond all other days. There is coming a time when every saint will need God's mercy to its greatest extent. It is the day we stand before the Lord in judgment. We do well to be reminded that even Christians will face judgment before God. It is not a judgment to see if we go to heaven or not. That judgment we make here in this life. The judgment we must face is the judgment seat of Christ. By the way, we can become merciful to Christians who have wronged us by gaining an understanding that some day every Christian will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And nothing, nothing will escape the Lord's judgment. That is true for me and every one else.

Let us go now to 2 Timothy 1 (read 16-18). Paul desired that God would show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus

because of the great help and encouragement this man had been to him. Then Paul says something very interesting. He says, "The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day..." When it says, "...in that Day..." the NKJV has capitalized the word *day*. I think it refers to the Day of Christ, which is a separate day from the Day of the Lord or the Day of God. In my understanding, the Day of Christ begins at the rapture. And this may refer to the time of the judgment seat of Christ.

I have spent some time pondering the day of judgment for the Christian. It is a most sobering thought. Go to 1 Peter 4 (read 17-18). I think there must be an illusion here to Ezekiel 8-9. I have just read that passage in my morning readings. Ezekiel was told to go to the temple and there God showed him what God's people were up to. The abominable things taking place there were a horror to Ezekiel. The day of judgment was near and God had sought to turn Israel and in no way could He turn them.

And in chapter 9, God called for those who have charge of the city. These may well have been angels that were called. And there was a man clothed with linen, who had an inkhorn. And the Lord told him to go through the city and mark those who groaned about the things being done in the city. These were those who mourned over the sinfulness of the city. But of those others of the city they were told to kill every person and not to spare any. They were to utterly slay old and young men alike, and maidens and little children with women. But they were told not to come near those who had the mark. And then in 9:6 the Lord said this, "...and begin at My sanctuary."

Oh, we need a picture of judgment day. So listen to Peter again (read 17-18). If judgment begins with us, those who have charge of the house of God, what will be the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God? But listen to this, "If the righteous one is scarcely saved..." Oh, what a day that will be. If there is anything that should put the fear of God in a believer, this should.

One of my commentaries said this of J.N. Darby, a famous Plymouth Brethren Bible scholar of the 1800's, when he was

dying. It says, "...a sister (who was caring for him) leaned over him and said, 'You will have a crown, Mr. Darby.' He said, 'I shall have mercy.'" When we stand before the judgment on that great day, there will not be a one of us who will wish anything bad on anybody else. I think we will want nothing more than that God's mercy will be in our favor.

And I have no doubt, there will be no believer who arrives at that judgment who will not receive some mercy. But there is no doubt, some will receive more than others. It will be like that with rewards as well. If ever we would wish we had experienced more spiritual growth here in this life, it will be on that day.

CONCL: So, we can summarize like this: First, who is it that will have mercy on merciful? I believe this does not refer to those people on whom Christians have mercy. Rather, it refers to God Almighty who grants mercy to the one who is merciful. And second, why does God have mercy on the merciful? It is because they respond to truth positively and become poor in spirit; mourn their sinfulness; become meek and then hunger and thirst after righteousness and then they become merciful.

And second, why will mercy be extended to the merciful? Well, I believe it happens again and again here, because the merciful have responded positively to the truth and grow deeper in Christ. And third, is mercy extended to the merciful because they are merciful? No, it is because they respond to truth, become poor in spirit; mourn their sin and repent; become meek; hunger and thirst for righteousness, and thus become merciful. That is why God extends mercy to them.

And fourth, and last, when will God have mercy on the merciful? Well, it happens here in life's experiences again and again as we grow in our spiritual lives. But I expect the greatest moment of mercy will come when we stand before God Almighty in judgment.

And so I ask, how does one become merciful in character? By responding positively to truth; becoming poor in spirit; mourning one's sin and repenting; thus becoming meek and thus

becoming hungry and thirsty for righteousness. That is how one becomes merciful. There are no short cuts.