

Mercy: The Way of His Kingdom

Matthew 5:7

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Introduction:

The Gospel of Matthew focuses especially on Jesus Christ as the Messiah King.

- Matthew shows that He is the Son of God, sent from heaven,
 - to establish a kingdom of righteousness in a world of sin.
- What a merciful King He is!
 - He knew that His elect people were rebels and enemies, both to His Father and to Himself...
 - He knew that our sin had brought God's wrath and curse upon us...
 - He knew that in becoming our King...
 - He would be taking on full responsibility for our sin...
 - And that that meant that He must pay the full penalty of it...
 - which would require Him to bear God's wrath and curse for us all in His own person!
 - He could not be King of an unrighteous kingdom, and there was no other way for us to be made righteous in God's eyes.
- But none of that stopped the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - He came to bear, in His own person, the guilt of His people and to pay the entire penalty of their sin.
 - He came to give His life a ransom for every one of them so that not one of them would perish.

In His public ministry,

- Jesus laboured to clearly set forth the difference between those that are the recipients of His blessing and those that are not.
 - Those that were truly blessed by Him and those that were strangers to His grace.
- There has always been a great confusion in the world about this.
 - It is not as simple as saying that everyone who has been baptised (or circumcised in the Old Testament) is blessed and everyone who has not is cursed
 - In other words,
 - we can't say that just because a person is part of the church...

- or because he is a part of Christ's kingdom...
- that He has the blessing of righteousness that Jesus came to bring.
- Jesus says that many of the sons of the kingdom will be cast out.
 - There are some in the church who will be cursed and some who will be blessed.
 - Yet, if you talk to people about this...
 - you meet people all the time who think that they are okay because...
 - they have been baptised,
 - or have joined the church,
 - or have walked an aisle,
 - or have prayed the sinner's prayer,
 - or whatever!
 - But Jesus if you look at Jesus' teaching as it is given in the gospels,
 - you will see that one of the main things He does is try to make it clear who is blessed and who is cursed.
 - Jesus does this because He does not want you,
 - if you are One of His sheep,
 - to perish because you only **think** you have His blessing when in reality you have not obtained it!

Just look at the Sermon on the Mount!

- We have been studying this sermon for several weeks and what do we find Jesus doing at the beginning of this sermon?
 - He is labouring to set forth to us who is blessed.
 - He is saying, "This is what characterises the blessed man."
 - He gives eight characteristics of the blessed man...
 - eight characteristics that set him apart from those who do not obtain the blessing of His kingdom.
 - So far, we have looked at four of them.
 - Today we come to the fifth in Matthew 5:7:
 - "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

I. If you are blessed in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, you are a person who delights in mercy.

A. One of our greatest problems as a fallen human race is that we are turned inward...

- We are wrapped up in ourselves and so twisted around in ourselves that we are cold and indifferent to others.
1. It is as if other people are not quite real.
 - a. You have probably heard people joke around about having surgery:
 - You ask them if it is major surgery and they say,
 - “The doctor said it was minor surgery, but I consider any surgery that is done on me to be major surgery!”
 - But this really is the way you think, isn’t it?
 - Whatever troubles you face seem somehow more significant than the things your neighbour faces.
 - They seem more real.
 - b. Luther commented that this inward focus is man’s most serious problem.
 - Jesus does not show you your sins and cause you to feel your misery for sin only to get you turned in on yourself...
 - Jesus shows you your condition to get you looking out...
 2. There are two ways you ought to look out...
 - a. First, you ought to look to find mercy from God.
 - As long as you are turned in on yourself,
 - you are not looking out to find mercy from God through Jesus Christ.
 - The solution to your misery and your sin is not to be found from within,
 - it is to be found by looking out of yourself to Jesus!
 - So you must look out to find mercy.
 - Jesus must become real to you—He must be a real Saviour in whom you trust and on whom you rely.
 - b. Secondly, you ought to look out to show mercy to others.
 - As long as you are turned in on yourself,
 - you will be cold and indifferent to the reality of the plight of the people around you.
 - It is only after you have looked outward to Jesus and found His mercy that you begin to notice the needs of others and to have compassion on them.

TRANS> All this is related to mercy.

B. Mercy can be defined as seeing another's load and doing all that you can to help him bear it at your own expense.

1. Mercy is willing to take up someone else's trouble as if it were your own.

a. Everyone is always very merciful to themselves—

- we are very concerned about relieving our own troubles...
- and mercy makes us just as concerned about other people's troubles as we are for our own.

b. There is a lie that became very popular back in the 70's that there are many people who hate themselves.

- After all, there is suicide and substance abuse...
 - Surely, these are people who hate themselves...
- That lie is still with us today...
 - But this is where it goes wrong.
 - The person who kills themselves or gives themselves over to drugs is desperately trying to relieve his own suffering.
 - It is not an effort to make oneself more miserable, but an effort to make oneself free of pain and unhappiness.
- But the Bible makes our love for ourselves the standard by which we are to love others.
 - The only reason people resort to drugs and suicide is because of a perverted self-love that makes them willing to do anything to get away from their problems.
 - True self-hatred would mean that you were pleased to be miserable and glad to have so much suffering.
 - But the truth is, if you were even half as concerned about the needs of others as you are for you own,
 - you would be known as a very merciful person!

c. You would be willing to give compassion, time, forgiveness, money, help, even yourself, to relieve others in their misery!

- There is always cost when it comes to relieving misery...
- There is a load to be borne, and when you are merciful, you are willing to help the suffering person carry the load as much as you are able.

d. The classic example in the Bible is the Good Samaritan.

- He saw the need of the man that had been wounded and robbed and began immediately to bear as much of the load as he could.
 - He treated his wounds,
 - He put the man on his donkey,
 - and he hired the inn keeper to take care of him.
- By giving his time and money and concern, he was able to bring relief to the wounded man.
 - He was the one that had mercy.
 - He saw that the wounded merchant had a load that was too great to bear,
 - so he did what he could to carry part of it for him.

TRANS> Now look at the merciful person described in Matthew 5:7.

2. He is the same person that is spoken of in verse 3, 4, 5, and 6.
 - a. He is the man who has come to realise that he must look outside of himself because he does not have what he needs before God.
 - 1) He has come face to face with the living God and he realises that he comes short of God's glory.
 - He realises that he owes to God a great debt that he cannot possibly pay.
 - As a result,
 - He is poor in spirit,
 - He is mourning,
 - He has become very meek or teachable,
 - And he is desperately hungering and thirsting for the righteousness that Jesus came to bring into this fallen world!
 - The blessed man in Matthew 5:7 is the same man who knows that he has a load that is too great to bear.
 - 2) But it is because of Jesus that he knows all this and is able to admit all this.
 - If it were not for Jesus and the righteousness that He brings,
 - this man would never be able to see His real need...
 - nor would he be able to bring himself to admit his desperate need.
 - It would be too much for him to endure.

- 3) But he admits all this because there is in Jesus a promise of mercy!
 - In Jesus, there is help!
 - This man knows that although he could never bear the load of his sin,
 - Jesus has come to bear it for him!
 - Here he was faced with the most significant debt of all,
 - the most terrible debt of all,
 - the debt with the most serious consequences...
 - And Jesus comes to show mercy—
 - Jesus has come to bear the terrible load...
 - And not just a part of it, but all of it!
- b. Now you tell me, what does such a man think of mercy?
 - 1) He thinks everything of mercy!
 - To Him, mercy is a very precious and wonderful thing!
 - 2) And what do you think of it, Christian?
 - That someone should come when you were totally helpless and take your burden!
 - That the very Son of God who owed you nothing and to whom you owed everything should come and take the dreadful curse of God for you—and take it all!
3. The result of receiving such mercy must surely be that you now want to show mercy to others!
 - a. How can you ever be the same?
 - How can you who have received such mercy in your desperate plight ever be cold and indifferent toward the plight of others?
 - Surely you want to do all you can to relieve them of their misery.
 - Surely you want to be like the One who has shown mercy to you!
 - Eph 4:32-5:1: And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.
 - You have become the child of the most merciful God—surely you want to be like your Daddy!
 - All the pride and hardness that kept you so cold and isolated from any real mercy is dissolved by His great love!

- b. Now you know that mercy is the very foundation of His Kingdom.
- 1) It is not optional in His household!
 - It is not something that is to be done every one in while—it is to be a way of life!
 - 2) Surely the Jews were wrong in Jesus' day who looked at mercy as sort of an extra thing to be done when you feel like it!
 - Jesus severely rebuked them for such an attitude!
 - He told them the mercy was one of the weightier matters of the law of God's house...
 - It is not secondary at all!
 - But aren't we too often just like the Jews?
 - Mercy is something that ought to be done, but it is sort of an extra thing,
 - not the very way of life.

TRANS> And let me add something that is particular important for us:

- c. In no way is this mercy like that perverted mercy that is so often seen in our society...
- I mean that perverted mercy that does not have the humility of the first four beatitudes as its foundation!
- 1) Do you know the kind of mercy I am talking about?
 - It's the perverted mercy that shakes its fist in God's face and says:
 - "We don't deserve all this suffering!
 - Nobody deserves it and I am going to do something about it!
 - I am going to do what I can to set things right in the world!"
 - 2) Such a person may do many things to relieve the misery of others...
 - But this mercy is laced with the poison of bitterness against God.
 - It is the mercy of a person who sets himself to fight against God and remove His curse from the earth.
 - I don't mean that this sort of person is always one who consciously fights against God...
 - Sometimes he may even outwardly submit to God—
 - Yet, it is not the true God of the Bible,
 - but a god that is shaped by his own imagination...

- It is the god that so many worship today in our society...
 - the god who agrees with the notion that:
 - “Nobody deserves to suffer,”
 - and the god who does what he can to relieve suffering and misery from the world.
- When this idol God is worshipped,
 - Jesus is nothing more than a man who came to promote mercy—
 - He is not the Son of God who came to bear the wrath and curse of God for His sheep—to give His life a ransom for many.
 - He is just another guy that did what he could to help.
- A person who worships a god like this knows nothing of real mercy...
 - He knows nothing of the mercy that was exercised when the Son of God came to bear the curse of His own holy law.
 - Such a person, for whatever good he might do in the world,
 - is not merciful in the way that Jesus uses the term in our text.

TRANS> You can only delight in real mercy when you have received the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

- And I tell you,

II. When you have received His mercy, your whole life will be characterised by mercy.

A. Mercy will flow out you like a steady fountain.

1. It will be an ordinary part of your life as it was with Jesus.
 - a. Perhaps nothing illustrates this better in the life of Jesus than to look at Him on the cross.
 - 1) I don't mean at the great act of mercy that the cross itself was,
 - but I mean the everyday mercy that continued to flow even in His hour of greatest need...
 - a) There He is, issuing pardon to the penitent thief beside Him and assuring him:
 - “This day, you will be with me in paradise.”
 - b) There He is again, praying that great pray of mercy to those who crucified Him

- “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.
 - c) And again, there He is considering the needs of His mother and commended her to His beloved apostle John to take her into his own house and care for her.
- 2) You see how even in this hour of personal crisis, He is not turned in on Himself...
- Mercy was a part of His very character.
 - It flowed from His life continually.
 - It is like a refreshing fountain that never ceases!
- b. Jesus tells you that when you come to Him and drink of the fountain of His mercy,
- You will become a fountain of mercy to others...
 - In John 7:37, it is recorded that Jesus said:
 - “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”
 - The passage goes on to explain that when He said this, He was talking about the Holy Spirit whom He would pour out on His church.
 - The Holy Spirit is the One who makes us into mercy-givers like Jesus.
 - We become little fountains of mercy like Jesus who show mercy to those around us each day.
2. It is a great change that is wrought in you...
- a. No longer are you blind to the needs of others, but now you clearly see them.
- Your senses are awakened to see what you used to overlook.
 - You truly are about other people.
- b. And not only do you see them,
- but you also move out of yourself to take action to relieve them.
- B. You show mercy to all kinds of needs
1. You show mercy to those in physical distress...
- a. You will help the poor as Deut 15 enjoins:
- Deut. 15:7-8: If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs.

- b. You will help anyone that you have the ability to help who is in distress.
 - The Old Testament uses the example of returning your neighbour's lost animal to him...
 - Or helping him to remove his ox from the ditch.
 - You will help him in whatever way you can.
 - c. This spirit of mercy includes showing kindness on the bus—to give an elderly person your seat...
 - or around the dinner table to replenish your guest's glass...
 - It is a life characterised by caring for others.
2. But this mercy will also do what it can to minister to spiritual needs...
- a. This mercy will take pity on the careless soul to warn him of his danger, just as we see Jesus so often warning his disciples...
 - Remember in the Garden when He kept telling them:
 - “Pray that you do not enter into temptation.”
 - b. This mercy will take pity on the ignorant soul to instruct him in the way of God.
 - Do you remember the women of Samaria that Jesus spoke to at the well?
 - As soon as she learned of Christ, she had mercy on the people in her town who did not know Him...
 - She rounded up as many as she could and brought them to Jesus, saying,
 - John 4:29: “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”
 - c. This mercy will take pity on the soul that is trapped in sin by going to him with meekness to restore him.
 - This is what you are instructed to do in Galatians 6:1-2
 - Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
 - One of the most beautiful examples of this is when Nathan the prophet came to David when David was trapped in his sin,
 - and graciously told him the parable about the rich man taking the poor man's sheep.
 - You can be sure that it was not easy for Nathan to go to David,

- but he was bearing the burden because he was merciful.
 - He was fulfilling the law of Christ for His house.
- d. This mercy will take pity on the discouraged soul to minister encouragement and hope in the promises of God.
- Surely you have all experienced a timely visit from a brother or sister that lifted your spirits to hope in God when you were about ready to give up!
 - Think of how King Hezekiah came to encourage the people on the wall to keep trusting in the LORD when they were about to wear down under the threats of Senacharib.

TRANS> And so you see then,

- True mercy will reach out to all kinds of needs.
- But that is not all...

C. True mercy will also reach out to all kinds of people.

1. It always begins with those that are nearest to you.
 - a. There is a hypocritical, ostentatious kind of mercy that is not a part of a person's character.
 - For such a person,
 - mercy is a special act that is done from time to time in order to say, "see, I am a merciful person..."
 - But this mercy has a way of overlooking and avoiding the needs that are right in front of it every day at home...
 - It is the woman who goes out to speak about the plight of the homeless and neglects the care of her own children to do so.
 - Or the man who makes an ostentatious gift to charity,
 - but does not bother to teach his son about Jesus Christ at home...
 - Or who refuses to provide for his elderly mother who is a widow.
 - b. The Lord is very forceful in condemning such behaviour!
 - 1) He calls those who would not provide for their parents in old age because they have given to the church hypocrites.
 - 2) In Timothy, Paul says that a man who won't provide for his own household is worse than an unbeliever!
 - c. The covenant structure that God has established for society is very helpful in drawing you out of yourself if you take it seriously.
 - 1) In the covenant structure, you are tied together with others...

- As a husband and father, you are responsible for the spiritual health of your home, and for providing for your home.
 - This helps you to learn to look outside of your own little shell to the needs of your wife and children.
- And it causes your wife and children to be dependent on you so that they also learn to look outside of themselves—
 - They look out to you for mercy—
 - Just think about it!
 - A little child has nothing to eat but what his parents give him...
 - A little child hears nothing of God and His wonderful works but what his parents tell him or expose him to.

2) God has arranged the church in the same way.

- As a part of a congregation, you have to depend on the other members, and you also have responsibilities to the other members.
 - This ought to set you to praying and ministering to them in various ways.
- If one suffers in the covenant community, it affects all the rest.
 - It draws you out of your narrow, individual shell to care for the needs of others.
 - To feel their burdens and to bear their burdens.
 - This is mercy!

2. And in the same way that mercy is to begin at home,

a. The apostle teaches that it is to begin in the church family.

- In Galatians 6:10, He says,
 - “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”

b. Likewise, Jesus taught that it was by that special love we have for one another that the world will know that we are His disciples.

- Jesus even states that the mercy we show to one another in the church is counted as if it were shown directly to Him!
- In the Church you have that people,
 - despite all their blemishes and warts,
 - whom Jesus loves so much that He shed His blood for them!
- If you do not love those for whom He died,
 - you cannot pretend to love Him.

- c. But brothers and sisters, I want to encourage you in this...
 - As Paul said to the Thessalonians, so I say to you:
 - I Thess 4:9-10: But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should say anything to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;

TRANS> Mercy begins with those who are closest to you in the home and in the church...

- If it is not there, do not pretend that the mercy that Christ talks about is anywhere else!
 - You may be doing merciful acts, but you are not a truly merciful person!
- 3. But understand that although mercy begins with those closest to us, it is not supposed to end there!
 - a. You are to do good to all men.
 - If you are merciful, you will be merciful toward everyone!
 - You will be merciful to those outside the church also, caring about them as persons and doing what you can to minister to their needs.
 - b. This mercy will extend even to your enemies as Paul says in 1Th 5:15:
 - See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.
 - If you are truly merciful, you will be pleased to do good to your enemies who have harmed you because that is what Jesus did to you...
 - It was while we were yet sinners—enemy rebels fighting against God’s kingdom—that Christ died for us.
 - It was His whole work to come and bear the load for His enemies.
 - How can we claim to be His disciples if we do not even feed and clothe our enemies when they are in need after our saviour has feed us with the bread that endures to everlasting life!

TRANS> If you are merciful, you will be merciful everywhere!

- If you truly have received the mercy of Christ, your whole life will be characterised by mercy.
- But look at what I have done...
 - I have turned this passage around backwards.
 - The text says,

- “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”
- But I have been saying
 - “Blessed are those who have obtained mercy for they will be merciful.”
- I admit that I have done that, but I did it for good reason.
 - First of all, I did it because the Bible teaches very clearly that it is not that we first loved God, but that He first loved us.
 - We love Him because He first loved us.
 - We are merciful only because Jesus was first merciful to us.
 - He is the One who starts it all, not us.
 - And the second reason I have turned it around is because the context demands it.
 - I already showed you that...
 - The merciful person of verse 7 does not appear out of nowhere!
 - He is the same person who is poor in spirit, mourning, meek, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness.
 - He is merciful because he has seen his own need of mercy and has received the mercy of Christ.
 - Brothers and sisters, the foundation of your mercy is the mercy you have already received!
 - But in our text—in verse 7—Jesus also teaches you to look ahead to future mercy...

III. He teaches you to look ahead to the mercy that is promised to you in the future if you are merciful now!

- A. This is a primary teaching of the Bible—that those who show mercy will be shown mercy.
1. It is expressly stated again and again:
 - a. 2 Sam 22:26 and Psalm 18:25 are very similar to our text:
 - "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;
 - b. Psalm 109:16-17 shows that the one who delights in cursing others instead of blessing them will get the thing he loves.
 - “Because he did not remember to show mercy, But persecuted the poor and needy man, That he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; As he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him.”

- c. Prov 21:13 shows that his failure to notice the poor in their need will lead to God's failure to notice him:
 - "Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard."
 - Proverbs 28:27 precedes the warning with the promise to the merciful:
 - "He who gives to the poor will not lack, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses."
- d. James 2:13 assures you that the one who shows no mercy will receive no mercy:
 - "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

TRANS> This does not refer simply to the fact that if you are nice to other people they will be nice to you...

- This is saying that if you show mercy to other people, God will show mercy to you.
2. Jesus actually teaches that when you stand before Him at the last day, your judgement will be determined by the mercy you have shown!
- a. In Matthew 25, He makes this very plain.
 - Matthew 25:31- "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of 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 took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to *You*?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting 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 take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, 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 He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch 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 everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

- b. Clearly, this is talking about final judgement, and clearly that judgement is based upon whether you have shown mercy.
 - There are quite a few other passages that show that the degree to which you will be rewarded on the day of judgement will also be based on the degree to which you have shown mercy to others:
 - Prov 19:17: He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.
 - Luke 6:38: Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."
 - Mr 9:41: For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.
 - Hendriksen concludes,
 - "When the golden seed of mercy is sown, an abundant harvest is gathered in."

B. What are you to make of all these passages and of our text?

- Does Jesus really mean that our reward in heaven—and even if there is to be any heaven for us—will depend upon our showing mercy?
 1. It is pretty obvious that that is exactly what Jesus means.
 - It would be hard for Him to speak any plainer.
 - "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."
 2. But isn't this salvation based upon works?
 - No, it is not that at all.
 - a. It is salvation **evidenced** by works.
 - When Jesus saves a person, there is a real change that takes place.
 - The person is different than he was, and he is different than those who are not saved.
 - He is different in that now he is merciful toward others, just as Jesus has been merciful toward him.
 - It is not just a theoretical change,
 - it is a **real** change!
 - b. It is not a change that is **sometimes** present when Jesus saves a soul...
 - It is **always** present.
 - If it is not there, you have not been saved, you are not born again.

- c. But do not think for a moment that your being merciful somehow merits your salvation!
 - It does nothing to atone for your sin!
 - That required the Son of God to shed His blood on the cross!
 - And not only that, your mercy is imperfect,
 - it comes short of the glory of God.
 - Only Jesus has fulfilled all the requirements of God's righteous law.
 - But the presence of real mercy in your life—though it is far from perfect—indicates that you have received the grace of God...
 - You would not have this mercy if you had not received mercy from Christ.
 - You came to Him for righteousness, and He has answered you.
 - He has begun a good work in you and you are producing fruit for God that God accepts through Jesus.
 - It is a seed that has not grown to perfection yet,
 - but it is a real seed and a seed that God accepts because it will grow to perfection!
- C. The good news, Christian, is that God fully accepts your good works as Jesus' disciple because He has fully accepted Jesus who died for you.
1. What this means is that you should be all the more encouraged to show mercy to others because that mercy will be accepted and rewarded by God!
 - This is given to encourage you to be more merciful!
 - Even though your mercy is yet far from perfected, it is accepted by God for Jesus sake!
 2. Jesus loves mercy, and He will never have sinner come to Him for salvation in whom He will not begin to produce this attribute of mercy.
 - It is the very thing that He will have to characterise His kingdom.
 - He will effectually teach every true disciple of His to show mercy...
 - And then He will identify every true disciple by the presence of that mercy in that disciple's life...
 - Even on the day of judgement, He will demonstrate that you are His disciple by the love you have for one another!
 - And He will reward your mercy by being merciful to you.

- He has promised to encourage you to exercise it!
- Just as a parent will promise to reward some behaviour he wants to see in his children, so Jesus promises to reward mercy.

- This mercy is one of the things that makes Jesus' kingdom beautiful.
 - He does not want a kingdom where it is not present...
 - He does not want disciples who do not have it.
 - Mercy is too adorn His kingdom not only in this world, but for all eternity.

- Even though He is the One who produces this mercy in you,
 - He loves it so much that He rewards it abundantly...
 - so that we can truly say:
 - "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

TRANS> But perhaps some of you have an objection:

- “You have turned it all around backwards!”
 - “The text says, ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,’
 - but you I have been saying, ‘You become merciful because you have been shown mercy.’”
- Okay, I admit it!
 - But it does say it the other way.
 - But I was following the context.
 - And in the context, the blessed person is the one who has seen his own plight and come to terms with it and has been relieved by the mercy of God.
 - The Bible is very plain in its teaching that we love God because He first loved us.

IV. But the Bible also clearly teaches what is said in the verse that I have taken as my text this morning—

- A. This is, in fact, very strongly enforced throughout the scriptures.
 1. It is expressly stated again and again.
 2. It is even the basis by which God will demonstrate what we are His on the last day!
 3. And by which He will reward us. There will be degrees.
- B. So you see that we are taught to see mercy from both directions:
 1. You are to look back on the mercy you have received to encourage you to show mercy to others.
 2. You are to look forward on the mercy God promises to you if you show mercy to others.
- C. What does all this mean?
 1. First, it is dead wrong to take this statement out of context and conclude that it is telling you how to obtain salvation.
 - The context forbids that because the context is all about recognising that you don’t have what it takes to please God.
 - Not only that, but the verse itself says that when you are merciful you will obtain mercy—not payment, but mercy!

- It is not that you have earned it and that God owes it to you, but it is that God deals with you as you have dealt with others.
2. But it is also dead wrong to think that God's grace does not change us. Every person who has truly been converted and granted new life in Christ will have new life, and one of the characteristics of new life will be mercy.
- a. If you have been saved and transformed into a new creation in Christ, you will be a new creation!
 - You won't be the same as you were before—you will be different
 - You will bear fruit, you will be merciful.
 - b. If someone washes your car, you expect it to be changed.
 - It may not be perfect, but it ought to be cleaner than it was.
 - Jesus loves mercy and it is something that He produces in everyone He blesses in His kingdom.
 - c. As with righteousness, He does not say how much mercy there must be.
 - The focus is not to get you looking inward, but to encourage you to be more merciful!
 - This is what a blessed one is characterised by.