

“Blessed Are the Merciful”
Matthew 5:1-11

Introduction

Point to remember—

the Beatitudes are not a *prescription* for having a happy life.
Rather, they are a *description* of a blessed life.

In other words, they are not mandates (Be poor in spirit! Be mournful!) telling Christians what they should DO, but instead they are descriptors of what a Christian should BE.

The Gospel of Jesus is concerned primarily with who you are before it is concerned with what you do. The reason for this is pretty simple—What we DO is nothing more nor less than an outworking of who we are.

So far we’ve looked at the first four Beatitudes:

The first three show us who we are and who we are becoming.

1. Poor in Spirit
We/Christians are able, more and more, to admit who we are—broken, sinful, and desperately in need of God’s intervention into our lives.
2. Mourners
We are able, not only to admit our sins, but also *to be moved* by them.
In other words, our understanding of sin and what it does to us and our relationship with God and those around us breaks our hearts.
3. Meek
Knowing that we are completely dependent upon God’s grace, we are humble.
More and more instead of fighting for our rights and opinions and preferences, we are willing to give them up. Right at the point when you’re willing and able to give up everything and be empty, the next Beatitude speaks of being filled.
4. Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness
We realize that the reason we can empty ourselves and let go of our sin and heart-sickness is because God offers to fill us with something far greater—the righteousness of Christ.

He declares us righteous and then says, in a word, “Now, be what you are.”

That brings us to today’s Beatitude, which begins to show what the overflow of Christ’s righteousness in our lives looks like and, before I read it, I want you to notice what it DOES NOT say. It doesn’t say, “Now that you are filled with righteousness, blessed are those who...”

- vote Republican (or Democrat)
- serve on numerous committees
- use PowerPoint/don’t use PowerPoint in worship
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No, the first thing Jesus says, after speaking of the blessing of “being filled with righteousness” is MERCY.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

As we look at the issue of “mercy” today, I have two points:

- I. Mercy: Defined
- II. The Mercy of Jesus

1. Mercy: Defined
 - A. Grace and Mercy

1. It's very easy to confuse mercy with grace, because they are similar, but there's an important nuance. Grace is God's unmerited favor toward sinners—in a sense, it is generic. Mercy, on the other hand, is the outworking of that grace—it always does something. Also, mercy is always practiced by a person with absolute power over a person with absolutely NO power. Finally, there is a pity component—mercy is shown because the person in power has pity on the person without power.
2. Biblically speaking, you see two types of mercy:
 - a) Physical—poor, widow, orphan
 - b) Metaphysical—shown toward those who are miserable, hopeless, and pitiful because of their sins.
3. For example: Matthew 9:9-13

Jesus calls Matthew and, upon following, Matthew throws a big party with Jesus at the center and all his friends (tax-collectors and “sinners” [code for “sexually immoral”]—basically, people that most of us wouldn't invite!).

Pharisees come and ask Jesus' disciples, “Why does he eat with tax-collectors and sinners?”

Jesus hears and responds, “...only the sick need a physician. Go learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’”

He tells, the “experts” that they don't understand the Bible (he tells them as much!).

Big Question: Why didn't the experts understand what that meant?

Answer: Because they'd never experienced it.

Principle: You can't be merciful unless you've experienced mercy, and then only to the extent you've experienced it.

Your experience of it is determined by how great you perceive your need to be.

Now, there is one exception to this principle: **Jesus**.

Jesus was and is merciful in spite of the fact that when, in his greatest, crushing hour of need, he denied it.

See Matthew 26:36-46—*The Garden of Gethsemane*

Three times he begged the Father, “...if there is any other way, let this cup pass from me...”

Luke's account says that Jesus was in such despair that he sweated great drops of blood.

The only answer he ever received was silence.

What's more amazing still that even in the midst of being denied mercy, Jesus shows it.

Luke 23:33-34—Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

How could Jesus show them such mercy without having experienced it and why could he show them mercy?

1. How?

He could show them mercy without having experienced it, because there was never a time when he wasn't the one with all the power. He was God in the Flesh.
2. Why?

He was able to cry for them for the same reason we cry at the end of *Ol' Yeller*. Yeller was the best dog in canine history and yet when he became infected with rabies—he was vicious. When you look upon him, you don't think what a nasty, horrible dog—you cry because you know that it is the disease that is making him vicious. If only the disease were taken away, he would be glorious again. Jesus is able to pity us because of the same reason—he knows that we are vicious because of the disease we carry—the Bible calls it sin. The beauty of the Gospel is that we can be healed of this disease because Jesus, on the cross “became sin” so that we might become the righteousness of God.