

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Matthew, the 5th chapter, verses 1 – 9. This is our fifth week in our seven-week series on the beatitudes, Jesus's sermon on the mount. Today our focus is on the merciful, and God's Mercy.

Mt 5:1-9 5 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

NIV

So many of us, myself included, have experienced a deep soul wrenching pain that has been caused by our fellow mankind. A pain that in that moment, and for even much longer periods of time in some cases, seems so unforgiveable. So unbelievable. “How could this person do this to me!” “How could this have happened to me!” we ask ourselves. It seems like such a personal attack at the time. So unforgiveable.

Now, this pain could have been delivered from a complete stranger, a friend, a family member, a beloved brother or sister, a boss or business partner, or countless other scenarios. Regardless of the source of this inexcusable behavior; which typically stems from a lack of good judgement, misguided intentions, poor decision-making ability, a lack of following through with what could have originally been good intentions, random compulsiveness, or even premeditated malice; the same result occurs, pain, suffering, confusion, a sense of loss, or possibly even feelings of anger, revenge, or even hopelessness. We must let it go. We must let it go if we are to truly find peace in our souls. The revealed Love and Peace that our master and Lord Jesus teaches us about, and that we read about consistently throughout the new testament. Christ reveals in today’s beatitude the way we are to let it go. Through mercy. There is Hope, and it comes from our Lord Jesus.

Unfortunately, this can be the misfortunate condition society lives in daily, moment by moment sometimes, in a fallen world where organizations, people and actions are dominated and driven by poor integrity, stony hearts, or where bad faith prevails. In a world where most individuals that we encounter are searching for a better way of life, in a world where most have a hunger for truth that goes unsatisfied, in a world where people are searching for a better way of life.

But we can overcome this, as Christians we can find a strength to rise above this, we can grow into God's grace and mercy from this, IF we allow Christ to dwell within our hearts and lead our lives in Love, If we choose Jesus as our Lord. As Christ assures us, "**Jn 14:6 "I am the way and the truth and the life."**"

When facing such a painful moment, have you ever asked yourself, "If I Fail to Forgive Others, Will God Not Forgive Me?" "If I Fail to give grace, Will God Not give me grace?" "If I Fail to show mercy, Will God Not show ME mercy?!" I know I have asked these questions, too often. We live in a hurting world filled with hurting people that have no concept of grace, forgiveness, or mercy. We must realize what we are praying when we pray our Lord's Prayer and petition to our Father in Heaven "Forgive me my trespasses, as I have forgiven those who trespass against me." Grace, forgiveness, Mercy! Grace, forgiveness, and mercy or everyone who has sinned against us, in order for us to receive forgiveness at God's final judgement.

**(An excerpt from Chapter 9 from Thomas a Kempis: The Imitation of Christ)**

What can I do for all my sins but humbly confess and lament them, and implore Your *mercy* without ceasing? In Your *mercy*, I implore You, hear me when I stand before You, my God. All my sins are most displeasing to me. I wish never to commit them again. I am sorry for them and will be sorry as long as I live. I am ready to do penance and make satisfaction to the utmost of my power.

Forgive me, O God, forgive me my sins for Your Holy Name. Save my soul which You have redeemed by Your most precious Blood. See, I place myself at Your *mercy*. I commit myself to Your hands. Deal with me according to Your goodness, not according to my malicious and evil ways.

I offer to You also all the good I have, small and imperfect though it be, that You may make it more pure and more holy, that You may be pleased with it, render it acceptable to Yourself, and perfect it more and more, and finally that You may lead me, an indolent and worthless creature, to a good and happy end.

I offer You also all the holy desires of Your devoted servants, the needs of my parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all who are dear to me; of all who for Your sake have been kind to me or to others; of all who have wished and asked my prayers and Masses for them and theirs, whether they yet live in the flesh or are now departed from this world, that they may all experience the help of Your grace and *mercy*, the strength of Your consolation, protection from dangers, deliverance from punishment to come, and that, free from all evils, they may gladly give abundant thanks to You.

I offer You also these prayers and the Sacrifice of Propitiation for those especially who have in any way injured, saddened, or slandered me, inflicted loss or pain upon me, and also for all those whom I have at any time saddened, disturbed, offended, and abused by word or deed, willfully or in ignorance. May it please You to forgive us all alike our sins and offenses against one another.

Take away from our hearts, O Lord, all suspicion, anger, wrath, contention, and whatever may injure charity and lessen brotherly love. Have *mercy*, O Lord, have *mercy* on those who ask Your *mercy*, give grace to those who need it, and make us such that we may be worthy to enjoy Your favor and gain eternal life.

Gods favor, eternal life. Shouldn't THIS be our life goal? But what could possibly align our life journey to bring us into this divine grace and mercy? Gods favor, and eternal life with him in Heaven? This is where we find ourselves this week in our discovery of the blessings within the beatitudes of the sermon on the mount. This is the fifth of the beatitudes where our Lord shows us the blessed life and what it looks like. He shows us that those of us who are merciful to others is blessed with the mercy that they themselves receive from God. You will notice something unique about this beatitude, is that the pronouncement of the blessing is the very thing that we are to do. The merciful will receive mercy. These two cannot be broken apart.

**Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.** So, receiving mercy comes to us by being merciful. Here Jesus is not referring to the mercy of salvation which God gives to a believing sinner; *that* mercy is not dependent upon a person's being merciful – it is a free, unconditional gift. Rather the Lord is speaking the daily mercy needed for Christian living and of mercy in that future day when one's works will be reviewed. (1 Cor 3:12-16)

12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

The mercy declared in matt 5:7 is almost the same as in verse matt 6:15 where Jesus tells us **We receive mercy at the judgement if trusting Christs mercy has made us merciful.** James puts it this way in James 2:13 **“For judgment by God is without mercy to those who have shown no mercy.”** But, mercy triumphs over judgement, that is, if we show mercy, our judgment will not be condemnation it will be mercy.

Even as it stands, todays beatitude in verse 7 is surely a great saying; **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy,** and it is the statement of a principle which runs all through the New Testament. The New Testament is insistent that to be forgiven, we must be forgiving.

in Mt 18:21-35

### *The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant*

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. 23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

35 "So My Heavenly Father also will do to you *if* each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

As we just pointed out a moment ago our Lord's prayer also makes this very same petition explaining and underlining the critical importance of us forgiving others, for us to be forgiven. It is the consistent teaching of the New Testament that indeed only the merciful shall receive mercy.

But there is even more to this beatitude than that. The Greek word for merciful is *eleemon* (el-eh-ay'-mone) which means compassionate, or sympathizing. But, what we need to remember that the Greek as we have it in the New Testament goes back to an original Hebrew and Aramaic. The Hebrew word for mercy is **Che'sedh**, it doesn't only mean to be compassionate with the person, it doesn't mean to simply feel sorry for someone in trouble;

it means the ability to get right inside the other persons skin until we can see with their eyes, think things with their mind, and feel things with their feelings.

So clearly, this is much more than an emotional wave of pity; clearly this demands a quite deliberate effort of the mind and of the will. It denotes a sympathy which is not given, as it were, from outside, but which comes from a *deliberate identification* with the *other person*, until we *see things* as they *see them*, and *feel things* as they *feel them*. Have you ever heard a person say, "I just wish you could see it from my perspective!" **This**, is doing just **that**. This is sympathy in the literal sense of the word. Sympathy is derived from 2 Greek words, **SYN**, which means *together with*, and **PASCHEIN**, which means to *experience* or to *suffer*. Sympathy means *experiencing things together with the other person, literally going through what they are going through*.

This is precisely what many of us don't try to do. Most of us are **so concerned** with *our own feelings* that we aren't too concerned about *the feelings of others*. When we are sorry for someone, it is, from the outside; we don't make a deliberate effort to get inside the other persons mind and heart until we see and feel things as they see and feel them.

If we did make this *deliberate effort* to **get inside** the other persons mind and heart, it would make a *great difference*, wouldn't it? It would make *forgiveness* and it would make *tolerance* so much easier, right? There is one principle of life that we often forget – there is always a *reason* why a person *thinks* and *acts* like they do, and if we knew *that reason* it would be so much easier to *understand* and to *sympathize* and to *forgive*.



If a person thinks, as we see it, *mistakenly*, they may have *come through experiences*, and may have *a heritage* which has **made them** think as they do. If a person is *irritable* and *discourteous*, they may be *worried* or they may be *in pain*. If a person treats us *badly*, it may be because there is *some idea* in their mind which is *quite mistaken*.

The French proverb has it right on, "To know all, is to forgive all." But we will never *know all* until we make a *deliberate attempt* to **get inside** the *other person's mind* and **heart**.

Isn't that what God did in Jesus Christ? In Jesus Christ, in the most literal sense, God got inside the skin of men. He *came* as a *man*; he came *seeing things* with men's eyes, *feeling* with men's feeling, *thinking things* with men's minds. God **knows** what life is like, because God came ***right inside life***.

That is just what God did; he came to men, not as the remote, detached, isolated, majestic God; but **as a man**. The supreme instance of mercy, ***che'sedh***, is the coming of God in Jesus Christ.

In our Lords kingdom, the merciful are blessed, for they shall obtain mercy. To be merciful means we must be ***actively compassionate***. To *withhold punishment* for *offenders* who *deserve* punishment. To help *others in need* who *cannot help themselves*. God showed *mercy* in sparing us from the judgement which our sins deserved and in demonstrating kindness to us through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

We *imitate God* when we are *merciful* and have *compassion*. It is only *those* who show **this** mercy who will *receive it*. This is true on the human side, because it's the *great truth of life* that in *other people* we see the reflection of *ourselves*.

If we are *detached* and *disinterested* in **them**, then they will be *detached* and *disinterested* in **us**. If they *see* that **we care**, their *hearts* will *respond* in **caring**. It is **even more true** on the *divine side*, for he who shows this mercy has become nothing less than like God.

(Closing prayer)

Oh Father in Heaven we thank you for the mercy that we have received from you,  
in our Lord Jesus Christ.

That you have been patient with us.

That you have taken us when we were unruly,  
when we were sinners, and turned against you.

When you cleansed us of sin and put us on the path to eternal life.

We ask Oh God that you would grant us to be a merciful people,  
that we would take every opportunity that is present before us to show this mercy.

And that to everyone in the church, we would find some way to show mercy,  
in the way that we need that mercy.