

Mercy Given and Received

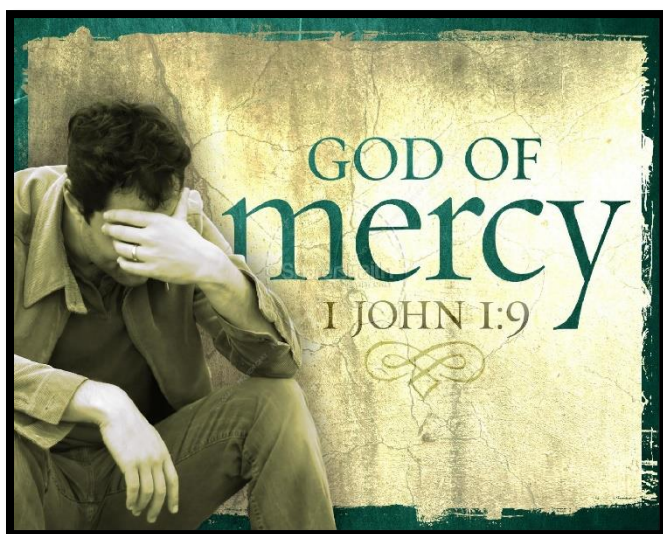
Matthew 5:7

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

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

The Sermon on the Mount as found in Matthew 5-7 is “one of the best known and most extensively studied discourses in the world.”¹ This sermon begins with “beatitudes” or “blessings” rather than imperatives to show that the holiness Christ expects us to emulate is attainable only through grace. The following sermon is going to primarily focus on just one of these beatitudes and that is mercy. Mercy is the outward manifestation of compassion and forgiveness towards other people.² Seems simple enough but considering the standard of mercy set when Jesus atoned for humanities sins on the cross, it is far from easy to emulate! Our bondage to religious trivia and self-exaltation have simply left many Christians predominantly focusing on “straining out gnats” of trivial, offenses against God while ignoring the weightier issues of personal holiness and showing mercy to a world filled with injustice, poverty and spiritual deadness. While becoming merciful is not easily attainable, from Jesus’ words we learn that mercy grows best in the fertile souls of the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness sake. It is only when a merciful heart has been cultivated in grace that God-given mercy can be shared with the world!

Origin of Mercy



“Mercy comes from mercy. Our mercy to each other comes from God’s mercy to us.”³ Romans 5:8 states “God demonstrated His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” There was a time when we were entangled by sin (Hebrews 12:1) wandering on the broad path that would only lead to hell and damnation (Matthew 7:13-14). The Bible states we were envious, full of hatred, gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, boastful, disobedient to our parents with no understanding, no

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 72.

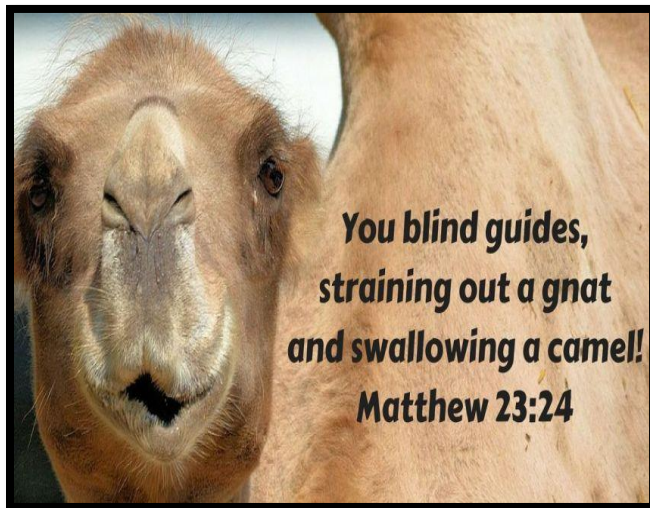
² Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

fidelity, no love and no mercy (Romans 1:29-30). And yet despite our rejection of God, Apostle Paul states Christ “chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy” (Ephesians 1:4). Apart from the cross of grace all of humanity would have “remained miserable and pitiful.”⁴ The humbling truth is that apart from Christ we can do nothing because to climb the latter of holiness one must first step on His unmerited rungs of grace (Matthew 19:26)!⁵ It is only when one understands the depths of one’s own spiritual depravity that one begins to appreciate the magnitude of the mercy one has received and are able to share it with the world!⁶

Staining out Gnats

One of the greatest impediments keeping today’s Christians from being filled and sharing their God-given mercy is what John Piper calls “bondage to the trivial.”⁷ In the never-ending desire to develop a stress-free life, as if that were even possible, our passion tends to lean towards pleasure seeking routines of normalcy. While no one likes to be called a carnal



Christian is that not a good definition for those who often spend most of their free time watching television, enjoying hobbies and eating?⁸ While in moderation none of these activities are bad, should not our primary focus be to seek first the kingdom on God in all that we do (Matthew 6:33)? And if bondage to trivial, earthly things were not bad enough, for the love of the world is a sin (1 John 2:15), is not bondage to “religious trivia”⁹ just as detrimental? Since the Pharisees chose to legalistically obey the “minor” details of the law while ignoring the more “important matters such as

justice, mercy and faithfulness; Jesus accused them of straining out a gnat to swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:23-24). To keep from being caught up in the mechanics of religious legalism¹⁰ or spiritual indifference God-given mercy received must be a crucial part of one’s very character and shared with the world!

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 76.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Fifth Beatitude.” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 397–398.

⁶ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

⁷ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

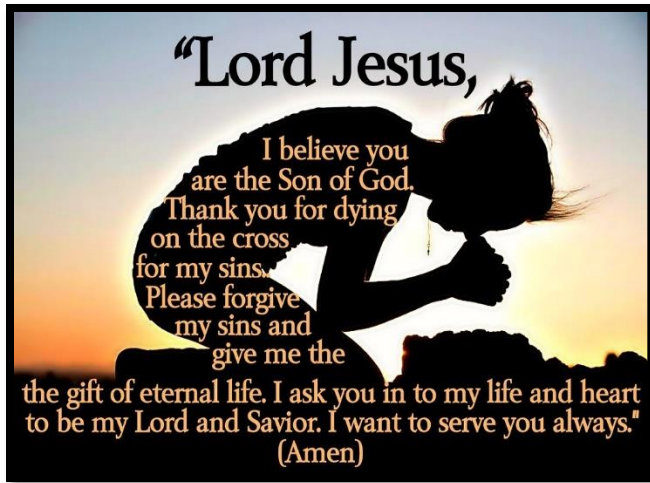
⁸ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

⁹ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

¹⁰ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

Characteristics of the Merciful

How does a heart become merciful? So far, we have learned that the first step in



becoming merciful is to acknowledge one's own spiritual bankruptcy and utter dependence on God!¹¹ When a broken and contrite heart cries out Abba, Father (Psalms 51:17; Romans 8:15) forgive me for my sin, please enter into my heart and be the Lord of my life (Romans 10:9), that person becomes born again and adopted as God's very own child (John 1:12). Through the power of the Holy Spirit such a person can attain righteousness and be filled with mercy¹² which grows best in the fertile souls of the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for

righteousness sake. Let's now look at how each of these characteristics helps one become merciful.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God” (verse 3). The poor



in spirit are not just the “economically disadvantaged”¹³ who cry out for God's help but also those who in their weakness have realized their utter dependence on God.¹⁴ Jesus is not saying that financial poverty in itself is a blessing¹⁵ but that hardships foster joy and reliance upon Him (James 1:2-4; Matthew 19:24). The merciful never “shut up his/her bowls of compassion”¹⁶ by offering the poor mere empty, sympathetic thoughts. They freely give according to their ability,

¹¹ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

¹² John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

¹³ Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 38.

¹⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 95.

¹⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 96.

¹⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, “*The Fifth Beatitude.*” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 400.

joyfully and cheerfully¹⁷ knowing that doing unto the least is doing unto the Lord (Matthew 25:31-46). For many commentators the “poor in spirit” are also those that humbly¹⁸ cry out in their spiritual weakness but at the same time boldly approach God’s throne of grace with assurance that Christ alone purchased their privilege to be in His presence and part of His family (Hebrews 6:19; 1 Corinthians 6:10). The merciful are more than willing to not only forebear with the spiritually weak (1 Corinthians 8) but also pray for and build them up in the faith (James 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11). Mercy is not just to be extended to the poor in spirit but also to those who are not yet born again. As Christ’s ambassadors we are to look for ways to do good deeds to the fallen of this world so that our light might shine and point them to God the Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16)!

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (verse 4). Blessed are those who mourn over “their sinful and self-destructive human tendency to act as if God does not exist!”¹⁹ Too often believers are quick to go to God and confess with their mouths their sin but their hearts continue to crave the pleasurable experience of that sin. Blessed are those who



in seeing their sin as a heinous, rebellion against the Holy Spirit²⁰ mourn for they will be granted the power to repent and receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Blessed are those who mourn over trials and tribulations for they will be comforted. Charles Spurgeon rightly said, “the worst ill in the world is not poverty; the worst ill is a depressed spirit.”²¹ James tells us that life’s difficulties are to be a source of “pure joy” because when persevered they lead to spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4). However, when life’s circumstances become so dire that they cannot be bore by one’s effort alone they become a source of

much brokenness! Blessed are those who do not live with a depressed spirit but instead cry out to their sympathetic high priest Jesus who will either remove their tribulation or give them divine strength to endure (1 Corinthians 10:13)! Blessed are the merciful for out of the comfort that they have received from God they offer to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

¹⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 400.

¹⁸ Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 95.

¹⁹ Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 39.

²⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 399.

²¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 401.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (verse 5). To become merciful Spurgeon states, one must become “gentle, humble, contented, weaned from the world, submissive to the Lord’s will and ready to overlook the offenses of others.”²² While the world perceives meekness as weakness, it is precisely in offering our bodies and minds as “living



sacrifices” that the weak become strong (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 12:10)! To be gentle and humble in heart²³ means to not focus on the injuries, intended or otherwise, against oneself but to leave them with the Lord to judge (Romans 12:19).²⁴ We tend to bring offenses up over and over again, fret and worry about them, spread them to others to justify our position and demonize the “perpetrator” and in doing so institute “worldly justice” that merely magnifies the prince of this world and dishonors God!²⁵ Since love keeps no records of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5) the “best eye one has is a blind one and the best ear one has is a deaf one.”²⁶ In light of the depravity of the

spiritual brokenness in which one was saved,²⁷ a truly merciful person will always be willing to offer forgiveness as many times as asked by the perpetrator ... for to do anything less would mean dishonoring and risking that God’s extensive forgiveness of oneself might become limited or disappear altogether (Matthew 18:21-35)!

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness sake, for they will be filled” (verse 6). To become merciful, one needs to do what is right in God’s sight. While it is certainly not easy to determine God’s perfect will, He promises that the “sacred hunger for the practical inwrought righteousness which is the work of the Spirit of God”²⁸ is granted to those who draw nearer to Him (James 4:8-10). Through the power of the Spirit those who repent of sin and embrace holy living are in a prime position to help the spiritually weak of this world. Like Christ the merciful do not look for ways to condemn the world (John 3:16-17) but how their thoughts, words and deeds might point to God the Father in heaven who offers them

²² C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 399.

²³ Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 39.

²⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 402.

²⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 403.

²⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 403.

²⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 403.

²⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Fifth Beatitude.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 399.



salvation. The merciful do not easily write off the lost of this fallen world but know in their hearts that “the brightest gems in his/her crown will come out of the darkest and foulest places where they have been lost.”²⁹ Such a person feels pit for all the nations and if asked by God would “gladly lay down his life to reclaim the lost, as the Master had done before him.”³⁰ As the deer pants for the streams of water (Psalms 42:1-2)³¹ so do the merciful pant and strive to tell the world, “He who saved a wretch like me is offering to save you as well!”

Mercy Given is Mercy Received

“**Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy**” (verse 7). I want to finish this sermon with one final blessing and warning: the measure in which one uses to extend mercy to others will be the measure in which God extends mercy to oneself!³² In thinking about all the



sin one commits and the horrendous tribulations one faces on a daily basis one can't help but cry out to God for mercy. To ensure these cries are answered with blessings may we become poor in spirit, mourn, meek and people who constantly thirst after righteousness! May we never shut up the bowls of our compassion but genuinely look for ways to give freely to others because doing good to the least of this world is doing onto the Lord. May never ignore the cries of the broken but in the comfort that we have received offer comfort to those who are mourning because of their sin or dire circumstances. Considering

the depravity in which we were saved, may we always be willing to forgive as many times as asked by our perpetrators. And finally, may we be willing to lay down our lives to witness to the

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, “[The Fifth Beatitude.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 404.

³⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, “[The Fifth Beatitude.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 55 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1909), 403–404.

³¹ Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 40.

³² Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 40.

wretches of this world because based on our firsthand experience when touch by the Holy Spirit the brightest gems truly do come from the darkest and foulest places. Blessed are the merciful!