

## **Beatitudes: Mercy**

Matthew 5:7

12/05/2024

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### TRANSCRIPT:

Matthew 5:1-2 tells us, "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying..." And what follows is the profound opening of the Sermon on the Mount, where our Lord Jesus Christ expounds upon the Beatitudes, those beautiful attitudes that should be present in the life of every believer.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we come before You again asking that You would help us at this moment, Lord, to gather our thoughts and our hearts and our minds and to bring them before Your Word with a readiness to hear and to do all that is written therein. Help us by Your Spirit, we ask that You would give Him to us in full measure, Lord, both for myself as I preach Your Word and for Your people as they hear the Word, that we would rejoice and be lifted up in worship as we come to Your Word now, and we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, last week we considered verse number six about hungering and thirsting for righteousness, which we looked at that righteousness being a moral righteousness and the life of the Christian being a continual pursuit to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ, to live a life of righteousness. And we considered how that is to be marking us, a certain hunger for righteousness,

a certain thirst for it, and we are to pursue that. Now, the godly characteristics that we are to have in terms of righteousness, they range from all righteousness, but one particular point of righteousness is mentioned here in the next verse of the text, in our text, and that is verse number seven about being merciful. And we are to see that godly characteristics and pursuit of righteousness is really making us more like God in His communicable attributes, or the attributes that may be communicated to man, the things that are in God that may be seen in man. There are some things in God that may not be seen, it cannot be seen in man, His triune and other things like this, but the attributes that may be seen in man, one of those is being merciful.

Well, it's quite interesting is that in the entire scripture, God is one of His most, if we could say, dominating attributes is His mercy. Yes, we see in scripture that God is holy, but also we see in scripture that God is love, and also we see in scripture that God is merciful. And one of the greatest attributes that reflect God in scripture, and what I mean by that is most consistently brought out about our God in scripture, is His mercy. It was Thomas Watson that said this, he said that the Hebrew word for godly signifies merciful, and he basically said the more godly, the more merciful. And I thought that was a very interesting point, that the actual Hebrew word for godly has connotations of mercy in it. Hebrew is a very broad language, one word has a lot of different nuance and shade of meaning, but one of those is God's mercy or mercifulness. And so it's important to realize that if we are going to pursue righteousness and godliness, that cannot be truly had without mercy being paramount in many respects in our lives, or evident in our lives.

But as you know, as well as I know, mercy is a very much abused concept. There are views of mercy today that rid us of the idea of justice, and they say, well, we must have mercy, mercy, mercy, and therefore in mercy, there seems to be very little righteousness also expressed. But these are not contrary one to another. The world today thinks of mercy in many respects as a person that is merciful, just relaxed and ignorant of trouble, or one who simply ignores justice and simply is one that just ignores problems and doesn't put their foot down with regard to anything or exact any form of righteousness. But that is not what the biblical definition of mercy is. See, mercy may regulate justice, mercy may regulate righteousness and justice, but it does not ignore it. Mercy may extend the longsuffering that is connected with the justice that is to come and may not inflict the punishment there, or it may absorb punishment, as it was on the cross, but in the Lord Jesus Christ. But what's important to realize is that mercy does not ultimately do away with it.

The Bible teaches us in Psalm 85:10 that mercy and truth are met together.

It's important to have the wisdom of knowing how that works. Mercy is not contrary neither to discernment. If you remember the Apostle Paul in 2nd Thessalonians was dealing with these people that were unruly in the church, and they were not working, okay, and they were basically saying, if any man does not work or refuses to work, let him not eat. Now you would think to yourself, these people have need and therefore we are to extend mercy to them. How is it then that Paul may say, don't extend that mercy to them of feeding them, they're better off that they, you know, that they get work. And so it's important to realize that the applications of mercy are not without discernment because helping people is not always giving them what they want, but rather helping them to achieve what they need. And it's important to realize that when we also think of the idea of mercy.

But mercy, whatever it may be, however it may be tricky to hold those things together, what we have to understand is whatever mercy we are considering, we must consider it in light of the mercy of God. You see, the mercy that God's people are to display is to accord with God's mercy. And the Bible teaches us in Exodus 34:6-7, when God reveals Himself to Moses there and hides him in the cleft of the rock and reveals His name. He goes, "I'll proclaim the name of the Lord before you." This is what the Lord says of Himself. He says, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty." And so you see that the mercy of God there, God is known for His mercy, but that does not mean no punishment for the guilty. And so there is this aspect that we must lift up the mercy of God in light of the scriptures and how they come together.

And so what is mercy? What is mercy? Well, mercy could be defined as that compassion which pities the misery of others that prompts us to action. It's important to have all those aspects in there. It is compassion that pities that prompts to action. If you don't have the prompting to action, it's not true mercy. It's pity that produces action. It reaches out in acts of kindness to help relieve the misery of those that are in misery. And it's important to realize that this is how the Bible portrays mercy. John Broadus, a commentator, said this, he says it implies a desire to remove the evils which excites compassion. It thus denotes not only mercy to the guilty but pity for the suffering and help to the needy. William Hendrickson also says, mercy is love for those in misery and a forgiving spirit toward the sinner. It embraces both the kindly feeling and the kindly act. And it's important to realize both the kindly feeling and the kindly act are what make up mercy. And it's important to realize that this is how the Bible portrays mercy.

Now in scripture, there are two main arms of mercy, if I could put it that way. If mercy is the compassion that causes us to pity the miseries of others and moves us to promptly help them, prompts us to help them,

well, the Bible teaches us that there are really two main areas in which this is displayed. And the first of that is with regards to forgiveness. Forgiveness, if you remember the parable, and if you'd like to turn there you may, in Matthew chapter 18, we'll see how mercy relates to forgiveness. In Matthew chapter number 18, Jesus has a question put to him by one of His disciples named Peter in verse 21. And then Peter came to him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." And Jesus then goes to proceed on to give a parable of the unforgiving servants, which is a common parable, where there was a king who had servants, and he wanted to settle his accounts with the servants, and he brings them all before him. And he brings this one servant who owed 10,000 talents, and he could not pay what he owed to the king. And this man begged the king and said, "Please have mercy on me, essentially. Have compassion on me," is the words that he uses, "because, you know, I have this debt, and I can't pay it," because the king said, "I'm gonna sell you and your family, and you're gonna have to pay every last penny." And he says, "Please have patience with me, and I will pay you." And then the master, in verse 27 of that servant, was moved with compassion, or moved with mercy, released him, and forgave him the debt. And verse 28 says, "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, a very small amount in relation to 10,000 talents, and he laid his hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe.'" Verse 29, "So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' This fellow servant says the same thing that the first servant said to the king. But it says, 'And he would not, but he went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.' Verse 31, 'So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion, or mercy, on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?"' The master was angry and delivered him up to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 'So My heavenly Father also will do to each of you, if from his heart he does not forgive his brother his trespasses.' And you can see what is happening here. Here is a man that receives mercy that will not show mercy. But the passage in the translation that we're using doesn't use the word mercy, but other translations bring out the word mercy there. And the idea is that there's this relationship to compassion and pitying the misery of another and then moving in such a way as to clear debt and to forgive this person of that which he owed. And so we see one arm of mercy is forgiveness, that is dismissing offenses that are done toward us.

But the other arm of mercy was read to us in the Bible reading this morn-

ing, and that is the arm of kindness, or the acts of kindness. And what we have in the parable of the Good Samaritan is the best description of that mercy. And if you remember quite clearly what is happening in this parable is that Jesus is answering the question of a lawyer who's saying, 'Who is my neighbor?' And so he wants to inherit eternal life, and Jesus says, 'Okay, well, love the Lord your God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.' But he, wanting to justify himself, says, 'Who's my neighbor?' If I can make my neighborhood smaller than what I want it to be, then I can justify the fact that I'm showing love to my neighbor. But if I extend the neighborhood to include all people, even my enemies, then I'm in trouble. I stand guilty. And so he's trying to justify himself by doing this. And Jesus goes on to give a parable which is quite interesting, but that parable is about what it means to love your neighbor. And he goes on to tell about this man who saw the Samaritan man who saw this man basically left for dead on the side of the road. And you see the Levite that comes to him and crosses the other side, and you see the priest that looks upon him and crosses the other side. But this Samaritan, to whom the Jews considered were dogs, he attends to this man, this Jew that is lying down half-dead. And the Bible goes on to say that he saw him, just like the Levites saw him, just like the priests saw him, but the difference is this: he has compassion on him, and he pities him in such a way that it moves him to acts of kindness, where he attends to his wounds, finds him a place of lodging, cares for him, and makes sure he's well, and continues to care for him along the way, saying to the innkeeper, 'If he owes you any more, let me know, and I'll come back and pay it.' And at the end of this parable, Jesus says to him, 'Who was a neighbor to this man?' And you know what the lawyer says? Not the one who loved him. What does he say? 'The one who had mercy on him.' You know what he's saying here? That what it means to love your neighbor is truly respond, the aspect of displaying mercy. And what happened with this man is that he saw this person, he pitied him with compassion, and acts of love and kindness stirred up within him and moved him to affect change, to deliver this man from his misery, for it is in his power to do it. And Jesus helps this man understand that this is what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

And so when we're thinking of mercy, we're thinking of forgiveness, but we also are thinking of acts of kindness, whereby we are moved with compassion in such a way that we see the misery of others and are prompted to do something about it. I think in many ways this reflects mothers very well, doesn't it? Who see their children in need and they are moved out of compassion to help that need. As Christian mothers, that should be the way in which there's response to the, if we could say, misery of the child, whether sick, whether in trouble. And Christian mothers that yielded to the Holy Spirit and do this best, where they lay down their lives in loving kindness to deliver their children from misery, if we could say, or trouble,

and they display this mercy and love as Christian mothers in a very powerful way by even forgiving their children when they do them wrong, and they don't get up in the next morning and, okay, let's keep going here, we're committed to one another, and they display such love and mercy in the way that they treat their children.

I think all these illustrations, the two biblical ones and at least the one from motherhood, shows us what mercy looks like, that it is more than just a feeling, it is a movement of compassion and love that prompts change and action, and this is very important for us to understand because of many reasons. Firstly, if God is a God of mercy, and the proclamation of His name is the proclamation of Him as a merciful God, then we must understand this: that if God is this way, so shall His people be, or so should His people be. You see, the Beatitudes here are testifying to us who are those that really belong to the kingdom of God. Like I said, it both marks those that belong to God and it sets us on the pathway of continuance in obedience to God's will and way, and here you have in the Beatitudes this very thing: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Blessed are those that have the seed of God in them, this seed of mercy that show that they belong to God. They are the ones that shall obtain mercy. This should mark us. You know what it says in Luke chapter number 6? It says, "Love your enemies, do good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you and hate you, that you may be like your Father in heaven, who sends the rain, causes the rain to fall onto the just and on the unjust, and He is kind," the Bible says, "both to the unthankful and the evil." And then at the end of that passage, it says, "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful," and it shows us that loving your enemies and doing good to those that despitefully use you and persecute you is the display of the mercy of God that should be evident in those who are His people, to be merciful just as your Father, that's the word there, is merciful. Your Father, so the Father, so should be the children of God. And so it's important to realize that our Christian message and Christian faith, and even our gospel, is a gospel of mercy.

You see, God looked upon man and saw the pity and misery of mankind, and He saw His people in sin and in corruption, and He doesn't just sit there and look and do nothing. God is moved with compassion and He sends His Son to be our Savior, to deal with our misery, to deal with our sin, to deal with our corruption, that He might bring us to God. And God demonstrates such mercy in the sending of His Son. This is the mercy. God just didn't sit there, looked and said, "Oh, it's a pretty unfortunate situation. Well, let them work it out themselves." He moved with compassion, had mercy on us. This is what the Bible teaches about the mercy of God, which should be evident in us, and also why this is important is because mercy impacts every relationship. When it talks about mercy, it

doesn't just talk about fathers, mothers, children; it impacts everything, even our relationship to our enemies, even our relationship to strangers, like the Good Samaritan. And so when we think of mercy and the extension of mercy, this truth should be evident in our lives in all the spheres of our relationship and should mark us distinctly as the children of God, the children of the God of mercy.

But also, it impacts our Christian witness, and this is very important to grasp, and I want to just help us comprehend this for a moment. Jesus, in His witness, did not simply speak; He acted. He saw misery, He gave the gospel to people, but He helped people in need and preached the gospel to them. You know what you see in the scripture is Jesus is in the house, we have publicans and sinners, and the Bible says that He's eating with them, and He's eating with them in the house with publicans and sinners. And the Lord Jesus Christ there in the house with publicans and sinners, eating with them, have the Pharisees observing, and what are the Pharisees say? "Look at your master, He eats with publicans and sinners. What's wrong with this guy?" And Jesus responds to them in Matthew chapter number 9, verse 11, to this question, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those that are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." And He said this, "Go learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And what Jesus understood was what was saying to the Pharisees with this: the Pharisees were marked by their extreme separatism, whereby they felt like, "We don't want to be ceremonially unclean by being around Gentiles or being in the presence of Gentiles or even eating with the Gentiles, so we must stay far, far, far away from the Gentiles." But Jesus is saying, "The Gentiles are sick, if we could say that. They need help. They do not know God. And so Jesus Himself steps into the house of Gentiles, or into the house of publicans and sinners, even Jews that were regarded as Gentiles, and He goes in there and eats with them, all that He may bring the mercy of God to them through the gospel of Jesus Christ. And what Jesus is saying to the Pharisees is this: "You can go to your temple every day and sacrifice day in and day out, day in and day out, but God desires mercy and not sacrifice." And what He's simply trying to say here is that true religion, as the Bible teaches, is undefiled before God and the Father is this: James 1:27, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." And what the Bible teaches us here is that true religion, pure religion, involves mercy. It involves the extending of kindness to those who are in misery, and carrying on the back of that mercy is the gospel of mercy that proclaims the grace of God to them. But the life of the Christian and the message of the Christian should match in mercy. We don't just tell people; we show people. We are to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

You see, the importance that we need to understand by this is that we are living in a world that is merciless. And what I mean by that is, from censorship to news embellishment and character assassination, the world here is not truly, genuinely concerned about the needs of people. They're concerned about their own name, climbing a ladder. It amazes me how it is so easy for people to post on social media, "Mercy, mercy, help so-and-so, help so-and-so," and then you ask yourself and wonder, would you be willing to go yourself? Would you be willing to sacrifice of your time, your energy, your effort to love and show compassion and display acts of kindness to those that are in misery? See, the world can decry that there is no mercy, but it is the Christian Church that is to be the light of mercy to the lost world, to show that we can truly show mercy and true sacrifice without anything in return because we have received the mercy from God that we now show to those that are around us.

But the sad reality is this is not the state of the Christian Church. You see, the church is not always, and not properly, if I could say, responding to pity for the destitute. I speak generally, but many of God's people are careless, not moved with compassion, sees trouble in community, sees trouble in neighborhood, but does very little, or asks the question, or even prays to the Lord, "How can we go about affecting change in this community for the sake of the gospel, to show our fellow neighbors that they are in need and to help bring that care to them?" The church is careless; maybe she's too comfortable. How isolated, insulated, should I say, is the Church of God? Very much like the Pharisees, too sheltered, doesn't want to be touched by the needs of others, doesn't want to be shaken so as to be moved to affect change, to step into the lives. It's very uncomfortable to minister to a stranger. It's very uncomfortable to have people enter into your personal space, or to have someone that either is you don't know very well or someone that is in need, to try and help them, assist them. That means that there's going to be a loss on your part, if I could say, or comfort, or whatever it may be. But the Bible teaches that we are to show mercy and to display mercy and to have pity.

Now, don't get me wrong, the Church of Jesus Christ, as she gathers on the Lord's Day, is gathering as believers in Jesus Christ, and the church, as the gathered assembly, is not for the unbelievers; it is for the believers. It means to be teaching of doctrine and of God's truth and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. But understand this: we are here gathering to go. We are here gathered today to be equipped, to be shaped, to be built up, to be grounded in doctrine and truth, and to be built up in our faith, so that we might better display the gospel to a lost and dying world and to go out from this place ministering God's gospel with mercy and compassion in our hearts.

You see, the church, yes, gathers as believers, and as believers, we gather to grow and to mature, but that's who we are to be here as we grow. But we gather to go. Our mission is not here necessarily; our mission is out there. And what simply has to happen is the church has to start waking up to the concept of compassion and mercy and realizing that if I've got all the first aid gear here, I speak figuratively, I need to go out there and help the wounded, those that are broken. Someone said, "These people don't know how much you know until they know how much you care." And there, I think there's a truth to that. I think there's something to be considered regarding that. But the church is so insulated; we're so comfortable; we're so happy to be untouched by the troubles of others, and we erect walls whereby we don't be touched by people's problems. But this is not what Jesus was like, was He? He went around preaching the gospel of salvation to all and helping those that were in need.

What's worse is that the church is self-justified. Remember the rebuke that Isaiah gave to the children of Israel? He says this, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. "I have enough of burnt offerings and rams. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or goats. Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. New moons and Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are trouble to Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands," that is, you pray, "I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." What is simply telling His people here is that there should be a sense in which we both within ourselves show mercy to one another, do good to the household of God, but also we see beyond and understand that we have a responsibility to love our neighbors as ourselves. And the multitude of our sacrifices and worship to God have very little respect to God and weight to God if our lives are not marked by mercy. This will happen to the children of Israel; this is what was happening to the Pharisees, and this is what Jesus was seeking to correct.

You ask yourself then, what do we do about this? Well, we have mercy on those who need mercy, and we pray, and we ask ourselves, "In what way, Lord, will You have me reach people for the gospel of Jesus Christ?" In what way? It could be as simple as reaching children in the community. It could be as simple as going in and helping counsel people that have broken families and situations. It could be as easy as looking at your workplace and a close friend of yours, even someone in your vicinity that has need,

and looking at them with compassion and saying, "Hey, I can help this person," and as I help this person, I can preach Christ to this person. But mercy, whatever it may be, however it may be tricky to hold those things together, what we have to understand is whatever mercy we are considering, we must consider it in light of the mercy of God. You see, the mercy that God's people are to display is to accord with God's mercy. And the Bible teaches us in Exodus chapter 34, verses 6 to 7, when God reveals Himself to Moses there and hides him in the cleft of the rock and reveals His name. He goes, "I'll proclaim the name of the Lord before you." This is what the Lord says of Himself. He says, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty." And so you see that the mercy of God there, God is known for His mercy, but that does not mean no punishment for the guilty. And so there is this aspect that we must lift up the mercy of God in light of the scriptures and how they come together.

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servants, and he brings them all before him. And he brings this one servant who owed ten thousand talents, and he could not pay what he owed to the king. And this man begged the king and said, "Please have mercy on me," essentially. "Have compassion on me," is the words that he uses, "because, you know, I have this debt, and I can't pay it," because the king said, "I'm gonna sell you and your family, and you're gonna have to pay every last penny." And he says, "Please have patience with me, and I will pay you." And then the master, in verse 27 of that servant, was moved with compassion, or moved with mercy, released him, and forgave him the debt.

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And you can see what is happening here. Here is a man that receives mercy that will not show mercy. But the passage in the translation that we're using doesn't use the word mercy, but other translations bring out the word mercy there. And the idea is that there's this relationship to compassion and pitying the misery of another, and then moving in such a way as to clear debt and to forgive this person of that which he owed. And so we see one arm of mercy is forgiveness, that is dismissing offenses that are done toward us.

But the other arm of mercy was read to us in the Bible reading this morning, and that is the arm of kindness, or the acts of kindness. And what we have in the parable of the Good Samaritan is the best description of that mercy. And if you remember quite clearly what is happening in this parable is that Jesus is answering the question of a lawyer who's saying, "Who is my neighbor?" And so he wants to inherit eternal life, and Jesus says, "Okay, well, love the Lord your God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself." But he, wanting to justify himself, says, "Who's my neighbor?" If I can make my neighborhood smaller than what I want it to

be, then I can justify the fact that I'm showing love to my neighbor. But if I extend the neighborhood to include all people, even my enemies, then I'm in trouble. I stand guilty. And so he's trying to justify himself by doing this. And Jesus goes on to give a parable, which is quite interesting, but that parable is about what it means to love your neighbor. And he goes on to tell about this man who saw the Samaritan man who saw this man basically left for dead on the side of the road. And you see the Levite that comes to him and crosses the other side, and you see the priest that looks upon him and crosses the other side. But this Samaritan, to whom the Jews considered were dogs, he attends to this man, this Jew that is lying down half-dead. And the Bible goes on to say that he saw him, just like the Levites saw him, just like the priests saw him, but the difference is this: he has compassion on him, and he pities him in such a way that it moves him to acts of kindness, where he attends to his wounds, finds him a place of lodging, cares for him, and makes sure he's well, and continues to care for him along the way, saying to the innkeeper, "If he owes you any more, let me know, and I'll come back and pay it." And at the end of this parable, Jesus says to him, "Who was a neighbor to this man?" And you know what the lawyer says? Not the one who loved him. What does he say? "The one who had mercy on him." You know what he's saying here? That what it means to love your neighbor is truly the aspect of displaying mercy. And what happened with this man is that he saw this person, he pitied him with compassion, and acts of love and kindness stirred up within him and moved him to affect change, to deliver this man from his misery, for it is in his power to do it. And Jesus helps this man understand that this is what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

And so when we're thinking of mercy, we're thinking of forgiveness, but we also are thinking of acts of kindness, whereby we are moved with compassion in such a way that we see the misery of others and are prompted to do something about it. I think in many ways, this reflects mothers very well, doesn't it? Who see their children in need and they are moved out of compassion to help that need. As Christian mothers, that should be the way in which there's a response to the, if we could say, misery of the child, whether sick, whether in trouble. And Christian mothers that yielded to the Holy Spirit do this best, where they lay down their lives in loving kindness to deliver their children from misery, if we could say, or trouble, and they display this mercy and love as Christian mothers in a very powerful way by even forgiving their children when they do them wrong. And they don't get up in the next morning and, "Okay, let's keep going here. We're committed to one another," and they display such love and mercy in the way that they treat their children.

I think all these illustrations, the two biblical ones and at least the one from motherhood, shows us what mercy looks like, that it is more than just a

feeling. It is a movement of compassion and love that prompts change and action. And this is very important for us to understand because of many reasons. Firstly, if God is a God of mercy, and the proclamation of His name is the proclamation of Him as a merciful God, then we must understand this: that if God is this way, so shall His people be, or so should His people be. You see, the Beatitudes here are testifying to us who are those that really belong to the kingdom of God. Like I said, it both marks those that belong to God and it sets us on the pathway of continuance in obedience to God's will and way. And here you have in the Beatitudes this very thing: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Blessed are those that have the seed of God in them, this seed of mercy, that show that they belong to God. They are the ones that shall obtain mercy. This should mark us. You know what it says in Luke chapter number 6? It says, "Love your enemies, do good to them that spitefully use you and persecute you and hate you, that you may be like your Father in heaven, who sends the rain, causes the rain to fall onto the just and on the unjust, and He is kind," the Bible says, "both to the unthankful and the evil." And then at the end of that passage, it says, "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." And it shows us that loving your enemies and doing good to those that spitefully use you and persecute you is the display of the mercy of God that should be evident in those who are His people. "To be merciful, just as your Father," that's the word there, "is merciful." So the Father, so should be, so should be the children of God. And so it's important to realize that our Christian message and Christian faith, and even our gospel, is a gospel of mercy.

You see, God looked upon man and saw the pity and misery of mankind, and He saw His people in sin and in corruption, and He doesn't just sit there and look and do nothing. God is moved with compassion and He sends His Son to be our Savior, to deal with our misery, to deal with our sin, to deal with our corruption, that He might bring us to God. And God demonstrates such mercy in the sending of His Son. This is the mercy. God just didn't sit there, looked, and said, "Oh, it's a pretty unfortunate situation. Well, let them work it out themselves." He moved with compassion, had mercy on us. This is what the Bible teaches about the mercy of God, which should be evident in us, and also why this is important is because mercy impacts every relationship. When it talks about mercy, it doesn't just talk about fathers, mothers, children; it impacts everything, even our relationship to our enemies, even our relationship to strangers, like the Good Samaritan. And so when we think of mercy and the extension of mercy, this truth should be evident in our lives in all the spheres of our relationship and should mark us distinctly as the children of God, the children of the God of mercy. But also, it impacts our Christian witness, and this is very important to grasp. And I want to just help us comprehend this for a moment.

Jesus, in His witness, did not simply speak; He acted. He saw misery, He gave the gospel to people, but He helped people in need and preached the gospel to them. You know what you see in the scripture is Jesus is in the house. We have publicans and sinners, and the Bible says that He's eating with them, and He's eating with them in the house with publicans and sinners. And the Lord Jesus Christ there, in the house with publicans and sinners, eating with them, have the Pharisees observing. And what are the Pharisees say? "Look at your master; He eats with publicans and sinners. What's wrong with this guy?" And Jesus responds to them in Matthew chapter number 9, verse 11, to this question, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." And He said this, "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

And what Jesus understood was what He was saying to the Pharisees with this: the Pharisees were marked by their extreme separatism, whereby they felt like, "We don't want to be ceremonially unclean by being around Gentiles or being in the presence of Gentiles or even eating with the Gentiles, so we must stay far, far, far away from the Gentiles." But Jesus is saying, "The Gentiles are sick," if we could say that, "they need help; they do not know God." And so Jesus Himself steps into the house of Gentiles, or into the house of publicans and sinners, even Jews that were regarded as Gentiles, and He goes in there and eats with them, all that He may bring the mercy of God to them through the gospel of Jesus Christ. And what Jesus is saying to the Pharisees is this: "You can go to your temple every day and sacrifice day in and day out, day in and day out, but God desires mercy and not sacrifice." And what He's simply trying to say here is that true religion, as the Bible teaches, is undefiled before God and the Father is this, James 1:27, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." And what the Bible teaches us here is that true religion, pure religion, involves mercy. It involves the extending of kindness to those who are in misery, and carrying on the back of that mercy is the gospel of mercy that proclaims the grace of God to them. But the life of the Christian and the message of the Christian should match in mercy. We don't just tell people; we show people. We are to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

You see, the importance that we need to understand by this is that we are living in a world that is merciless. And what I mean by that is from censorship to news embellishment and character assassination, the world here is not truly, genuinely concerned about the needs of people; they're

concerned about their own name, climbing a ladder. It amazes me how it is so easy for people to post on social media, "Mercy, mercy, help so-and-so, help so-and-so," and then you ask yourself and wonder, "Would you be willing to go yourself? Would you be willing to sacrifice of your time, your energy, your effort to love and show compassion and display acts of kindness to those that are in misery?" See, the world can decry that there is no mercy, but it is the Christian Church that is to be the light of mercy to the lost world, to show that we can truly show mercy and true sacrifice without anything in return because we have received the mercy from God that we now show to those that are around us.

But the sad reality is this is not the state of the Christian Church. You see, the church is not always, and not properly, if I could say, responding to pity for the destitute. I speak generally, but many of God's people are careless, not moved with compassion, sees trouble in community, sees trouble in neighborhood, but does very little or asks the question, or even prays to the Lord, "How can we go about affecting change in this community for the sake of the gospel, to show our fellow neighbors that they are in need and to help bring that care to them?" The church is careless; maybe she's too comfortable. How isolated is the church, insulated, should I say, is the Church of God? Very much like the Pharisees, too sheltered, doesn't want to be touched by the needs of others, doesn't want to be shaken so as to be moved to affect change, to step into the lives. It's very uncomfortable to minister to a stranger. It's very uncomfortable to have people enter into your personal space or to have someone that either is you don't know very well or someone that is in need, to, you know, try and help them in a system. That means that there's going to be a loss on your part, if I could say, or comfort, or whatever it may be. But the Bible teaches that we are to show mercy and to display mercy and to have pity.

Now, don't get me wrong, the Church of Jesus Christ, as she gathers on the Lord's Day, is gathering as believers in Jesus Christ, and the church, as the gathered assembly, is not for the unbelievers; it is for the believers. It means to be teaching of doctrine and of God's truth and equipping the Saints for the work of the ministry. But understand this: we are here gathering to go. We are here gathered today to be equipped, to be shaped, to be built up, to be grounded in doctrine and truth, and to be built up in our faith so that we might better display the gospel to a lost and dying world and to go out from this place ministering God's gospel with mercy and compassion in our hearts.

You see, the church, yes, gathers as believers, and as believers, we gather to grow and to mature, but that's who we are to be here as we grow. But we gather to go. Our mission is not here necessarily; our mission is out there. And what simply has to happen is the church has to start waking up to

the concept of compassion and mercy and realizing that if I've got all the first aid gear here, I speak figuratively, I need to go out there and help the wounded, those that are broken. Someone said, "These people don't know how much you don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." And there, I think there's a truth to that. I think there's something to be considered regarding that. But the church is so insulated; we're so comfortable; we're so happy to be untouched by the troubles of others, and we erect walls whereby we don't be touched by people's problems. But this is not what Jesus was like, was He? He went around preaching the gospel of salvation to all and helping those that were in need.

What's worse is that the church is self-justified. Remember the rebuke that Isaiah gave to the children of Israel? He says this, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. "I have enough of burnt offerings and rams. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or goats. Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. New moons and Sabbaths and the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are trouble to Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands," that is, you pray, "I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

What is simply telling His people here is that there should be a sense in which we both within ourselves show mercy to one another, do good to the household of God, but also we see beyond and understand that we have a responsibility to love our neighbors as ourselves. And the multitude of our sacrifices and worship to God have very little respect to God and weight to God if our lives are not marked by mercy. This will happen to the children of Israel; this is what was happening to the Pharisees, and this is what Jesus was seeking to correct.

You ask yourself then, what do we do about this? Well, we have mercy on those who need mercy, and we pray, and we ask ourselves, "In what way, Lord, will You have me reach people for the gospel of Jesus Christ?" In what way? It could be as simple as reaching children in the community. It could be as simple as going in and helping counsel people that have broken families and situations. It could be as easy as looking at your workplace and a close friend of yours, even someone in your vicinity that has need, and looking at them with compassion and saying, "Hey, I can help this person," and as I help this person, I can preach Christ to this person and lead them to the Savior who can resolve and rectify and bring peace to trouble. I

know the Prince of Peace; I can tell you about His love. But if the church is insulated and isolated, the church will blind its eyes to the problems that are around them and not go forward in mercy, seeking to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. What that looks like may differ for everyone in their own context, but all I'm simply saying is this: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And the Bible is teaching us more than just forgiveness here; it's also teaching us about acts of kindness, whereby we feel the pinch, and people are delivered from certain misery. "Blessed are the merciful," and the promise here is, "for they shall obtain mercy." And this comes as warning and consolation. It is almost like saying, "What you sow is what you reap." There is consolation here for those that practice mercy, as all true Christians should. They continue to walk down the pathway of God's mercy and experience the mercy of God in their lives more and more and more. But it is the wicked and the ungodly that have no mercy and show no mercy, and they shall be thrown into the lake of fire, as that unjust servant was.

This is important to recognize because it is this divine quality of God that should be in us, that marks us as believers. Jesus is not teaching us that the way of salvation is through acts of kindness, but He's teaching us the marks of those that are truly His, that have tasted of mercy and shall taste mercy, of those who have been forgiven, who display that mercy toward others. With the merciful, God says He will be merciful.

And so, all we need to do here this morning, brethren, is to ask ourselves some important questions. Firstly, how much has the mercy of God touched your life? You know, if God's mercy has extended to you in the gospel of His Son, and you have been pitied above all men and have tasted of the grace of God in such a powerful way, it is incumbent upon us also to have pity and compassion upon those that are in their misery. And the gospel of Jesus Christ that compels us should compel us outside of our walls to a lost and dying world, to tell them of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, to plead with them that are perishing that they can have everlasting life. And the way that we get to them is by going to them. How do we get to them? We go to them with mercy and tell them of the love of Jesus and display that love to them in acts of kindness. And the first thing we need to do is to look to the cross afresh and realize that what we have is far more than we deserve, and what we have is so great and so glorious that it should not be kept to ourselves but should be extended to those that are lost.

What if God never pitied you? What if God never looked upon your misery? Where would you be? You see, we have to be reminded time and time again of this because we go about our day forgetting the mercies of God that are in Christ Jesus that should change the way and revolutionize the way that

we live in the world. What if God did not pity you? Have you ever thought about that? That is a powerful thought. Where would I be if God did not mercy me, if God did not come to me? Where would I be today? I would not be here. I would not have my wife. I would not have my son. I would not have a wonderful community I'm a part of. And worse than most of all, I would not have salvation through Jesus Christ, my Lord. But because God looked upon me in mercy, I have tasted something that the world does not know, and I can, therefore, reflect, and you and I can reflect that mercy to a lost and dying world, so that they can know what it means to have something that they do not deserve, given to them freely as a gift.

We have to be reminded of this. Secondly, what we have to also do in application is forgive those that have trespassed against us. You know, any problems that we have with others that we are unwilling to reconcile makes our hearts callous and hard to the point that we no longer see and pity others. It hardens our heart, but we must forgive, as the parable teaches, as Jesus has constantly taught us. If we forgive people our trespasses, God will forgive our trespasses. And what should mark a believer is forgiveness, a pity on those that sin against us. But, Josh, you don't know what they've done to me; they deserve this. Firstly, you are not the one to inflict judgment; that is God's. "Vengeance is Mine," says the Lord, "I will repay." Secondly, what we have to understand is that our duty is to forgive those that have trespassed against us, not to enact judgment upon them. But they're terrible. Aren't we? Are we any better? "You don't know what they've done to me." I understand that it's hard, perhaps in your situation, maybe I don't understand how bad your situation is, but what I understand is this: what you have done to God and His name is much worse, and what God has shown you is a greater kindness than you can ever show to anyone else. And so, forgiveness is part and parcel of the Christian life, and we should be marked by forgiveness.

How many times? Seventy times seven. There's never a time where God's people should not practice forgiveness. It's very sad because in the Christian church, there's so much inward bickering and fighting and backbiting and bitterness against one another. You wonder why the church's witness in the world is dim. Wonder why she doesn't see the miseries of others because she doesn't see how hard and callous she is to her own brother or her own sister in Christ. But it begins there with forgiveness. God's forgiven me; I must forgive others. And there's no reason why I should hang on to that crime, even though I'm wrong. I'm not saying don't exercise discernment, and I'm not saying there's not a place for justice with regards to the authorities that are to inflict justice. And I am simply saying this: there is no place for unforgiveness in the heart of the forgiven. No place for it. And it makes us callous and cold and destroys the ministry of mercy to others.

Watch out for occasions of mercy. You know, every day we are presented with occasions for mercy. Every day, you are probably wronged by somebody, whether it's your wife or your children or your brothers or sisters or your work colleagues. They look at you the wrong way, say something; that's an occasion for mercy right there. There's occasions everywhere. You out in the world, in the community, there are occasions for acts of kindness everywhere. Pray, "God, open my eyes. Help me see the need and the misery of others." Pity those that do wrong against you because they are stuck and in bondage to their sin. Pity them. Realize, "Oh, I feel sorry for them that they're so bitter and angry, even against me or against whoever it is." And I pray for them that they might be delivered from bitterness because bitterness eats up and destroys them. And, "Lord, please have mercy on them."

When others are in need, don't wait for somebody else to do it. If you can do it, it's in your means, it's before you, and providentially God has brought it. Ask the Lord, "Lord, how can I help this person practically?" I was preparing for this sermon, and something very interestingly happened. I was driving home from work, a long day at work, as in, coming, big day, you know, lots of things to do, a lot of sermon prep to do, and I pull up in my driveway, and one of our neighbors was walking, older lady, she was walking, and she had a—she bought some cheese, okay, and she left it at ALDI down the road, and she was walking back, and it was about to rain. She was walking, she was walking back. I get out of my car, she's like, "Hello, hello, how are you?" And she's telling me the story, "I can't drive my car. I can't get to this place, so I'm just walking." Now, in my heart, there was a quick second, there's like, "Okay, you're walking. It's fun. It's good, you know, walking, it's great, nice walk," you know. But then in my heart, it's like, "Mercy, okay, yes. Do you want a lift? I could take you right now." She's like, "No, no, no, don't get in the car." "No, you know, you need a lift." And so she got in the car, drove it down to ALDI, she's like, "Oh, you're a good Christian man. Thank you so much," you know, and all these kinds of things. And you know, and I was thinking to myself, "Okay, Lord, that was a test. That was a test." You know, you know, the sad reality is, had I not been preparing this sermon, was that fresh on my mind, maybe I may not have responded that way, you know. I was convicted. I was challenged, you know. But I hope to God that I will respond more frequently to the occasions of mercy that present themselves. And I'm thinking, "I'm busy. I've got things happening. Things are going here, and there's an interference right now," you know. But it's not an interference, is it? This is what God has called us to. How on earth can it be an interference if God has called us to it? He will help us to do it, and He will take care of the other things.

So don't dismiss duty. Take responsibility. Let compassion compel you. And keep that second commandment before your eyes: to love your neigh-

bor as yourself. I just want to read to you, in closing, Micah 6:6-8, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Maybe today's the day we need to hear the words of Jesus: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'" Let us pray.