

# Merciful

by Anton Bosch

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of embodying mercy as a fundamental aspect of Christian character, reflecting God's nature and teachings.*

**Duration:** 55:43

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:3-11, Matthew 6:11, Matthew 6:14

**Topics:** "Mercy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being merciful and showing compassion to others. He highlights that God's mercy becomes abundant in our lives when we are truly merciful. The preacher also emphasizes the need to put our understanding of mercy into practice and not just talk about it. He clarifies that while acts of mercy are important, they are not the basis of salvation, which is solely based on the finished work of Jesus on the cross. The preacher encourages believers to confidently preach the word of God and live out the teachings of Jesus, including being merciful.

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## Transcript

Matthew 5, let's read the first 12 verses Now, just by way of introducing the importance of the Beatitudes, you'll find that verse 1 says And seeing the multitudes who went up on a mountain, and when he was seated, his disciples came to him. And the rabbis would be seated in order to teach authoritatively. And so they may have discussions as they walk and as they stand around.

But when a rabbi would sit down, it means that he was now going to speak with authority. He was going to declare that which is the will and the purpose of God. You'll find the same happening in Luke chapter 4 when Jesus goes into the synagogue and it says that he was given the scroll and he reads.

Now, he would not have been the only reader. There could have been as many as seven people who read. But the last rabbi to read, the last teacher to read, would invariably be the one who would then expound the word, who would then make the word plain.

And you'll see that when he had closed the seal, or when he had closed the scroll, he gave it back to the attendant and it says that he sat down. And he then begins to say, Today the scripture has been fulfilled in your ears. And so, again, you see the concept of sitting down in order to speak with authority.

We find the same concept carried forward today. So that today we find that when you speak about a professor, you'll find that they speak of him occupying a chair. A chair of philosophy or a chair of science or a chair of something or the other.

Meaning the position of authority on that particular subject. And so professors today occupy a chair. You find also that the Pope, when he speaks ex-cathedra.

Now, when the Pope speaks ex-cathedra, apparently he is infallible. He cannot make a mistake. And so when he spoke ex-cathedra and he said that the earth is flat and that Galileo and those guys were heretics, well then he couldn't have made a mistake.

And of course that took them many hundreds of years to change their mind on that one. But the word ex-cathedra means from the chair, from the seat. And so when he speaks from the seat, he speaks infallibly according to their tradition.

So you can see that it's carried forward today. And so it's very important to understand that when a rabbi sits down to speak, those are very authoritative words. Now at the end of the Beatitudes, this is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mountain.

It goes through three chapters to the end of chapter seven. And at the end of chapter seven when he completed speaking, verse 28 says, And so it was when Jesus had ended these sayings that the people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. And so these three chapters contain very authoritative statements.

And the people recognized that when Jesus was teaching these things, that he was teaching in a different way to the way that the scribes. Now you'll see they compare it to the scribes. Now the scribes would teach in a very indefinite way.

The scribes would teach, and there are those who are encouraging this form of teaching today again. And I don't believe that that is God's intention for us in teaching. But what they would say is that Rabbi Hillel on this subject says so-and-so, but Rabbi Gamaliel says so-and-so, and Rabbi Moshe says so-and-so.

And then they would leave it to the people to make up their own minds as to what way they would follow. So they would present the different points of view and the different arguments from the different sages in the Hebrew teaching. But Jesus doesn't come with that kind of teaching.

You'll see that he says that you have heard it said of old, you shall not murder, but I say to you. And so he was speaking the word of God. Now we cannot as men always speak with that same authority, but we have to speak the word of God, and we have to declare the word of God.

We can't just present the arguments and say, well, you know, this is one option, and that's another option, and you make up your mind which one you want to believe. We have a message to declare. We have a word to preach, and we need to preach that word.

Maybe not with the kind of human authority that some men like to preach with, but if we believe that this is the word of God, that this is the truth, we need to speak it with confidence, believing that that and knowing that that is the truth. And that was the difference between the Lord Jesus. So these sayings of the Lord Jesus are very, very important, and they lay the foundation for the whole of the church and of the kingdom.

Now we're dealing this morning with verse 7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Again, there are two very important statements we have to make before we begin to speak about this.

The first is that He's not saying, blessed are those who show mercy, but blessed are the merciful. This deals not with what we do, but with what we are. Obviously, if we are merciful, we will show mercy.

But we can't add on. We spoke last week about these things that we add on to our lives, and so we add on grace, we add on mercy, we add on love, but these are just things that we add on, and they're not really part of who we are. Jesus says, blessed are the merciful.

We need to be, in our very being, mercy and merciful, the same way as we'll see this morning that God is mercy. That is the very nature and character of God. And so the acts of mercy that come from God are not just things that He chooses to do from time to time, but they are an expression of His person and of His character.

And so when Jesus says that blessed are the merciful, we need to be merciful by nature. Now, the second problem we have is that some people are more, shall we say, soft by nature. They are more kind by nature.

They are by nature, and I mean by nature the way that they are without Christ. Even before they were saved, they were kind people. They were gentle people.

Now, that's not what He is speaking about here. This is not a natural thing, because then God is partial. Then people who are born with a natural gentleness have an advantage over others who are born more aggressive, who are born less gentle and less kind.

But the Scripture doesn't make that kind of distinction. And so what He is obviously speaking about here is not my natural ability, but He is speaking about my born-again nature and a work of the Spirit, so that we should all be merciful. It doesn't matter what our carnal or our natural birth has given us, but our spiritual rebirth should bring us into, and our relationship with the Lord Jesus should bring us into a place where we are merciful, and where we are like the Lord Jesus in this respect.

Now, this is not a small part of the teaching of the Scriptures, and yet one will hear very little preaching and teaching on it. It's a very important part of the Scriptures. In Micah chapter 6 you'll find that he says, We know that verse off by heart, I'm sure.

What does the Lord require? Micah says, this is the sum of God's requirements. It's first of all that we walk justly. That was the one we dealt with last week.

Secondly, that we love mercy. And thirdly, that we walk humbly with our God. And so this is an absolute requirement.

In the book of Matthew chapter 23, if you'll turn with me there, we find that Jesus speaks with the Pharisees, and Matthew 23, the whole chapter, or most of the chapter, is Jesus' dealings with the Pharisees, and showing them for who they really were. In Matthew 23 and verse 23, he says, Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone.

Blind guides, you strain out a gnat and you swallow a camel. And so he's not saying that the 10 commandments and the 613, or the 10 and the other 603, are not important. But he's saying more important than all the 613 commands in the Torah and the Old Testament is the commands, or the instructions, or the spirit behind these things, justice and mercy and faith.

Justice and mercy and faith. And so we can know all of the scriptures, and we can apply all of them in a very legalistic way, but if these weightier matters, Jesus calls them the weightier matters, the heavier matters, the more important matters of the law, if these are absent within us, we have failed. And so they are justice, to walk justly, mercy, to love mercy, and faith, to walk humbly with your God.

You see the Lord Jesus using the same principles that Micah illustrated or used. And so Jesus says that you can keep all of the commandments. These are the real issues of the commandments.

He's not saying forget the 613. He's not saying to them, those were not important. He says those you should have done, but this you should have done first.

And so he says you strain at a camel, sorry you strain at a gnat, you take little issues out, but you leave the major issues. And so keeping the Sabbath, if I use that as an example, you worry about keeping the Sabbath, but you're not showing mercy. Now in that context he's saying the Sabbath is really a gnat, if you don't keep the Sabbath.

But if you don't show mercy, that's a camel that you're swallowing. That's the importance of justice and mercy and of faith. Now in Exodus chapter 34, we find that Moses wants to see God.

He asks for God to reveal himself to him. And mercy is essential, it is fundamental to the person of God. This is who God is, not just in the New Testament.

Again we get this impression sometimes that God in the Old Testament was a God of justice and of law and of punishment, and that the God in the New Testament is a God of love and of mercy. But God was always and always is a God of mercy. And in Exodus chapter 34 and verse 5, the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, that's Moses, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. And so in the Lord's revelation to Moses, the first statement that God makes, the first revelation that comes to Moses is the fact that God is merciful, that God is merciful. Now in this passage, just notice, because we're going to come back to this concept but not back to the scripture a little bit later, you'll find in verse 7 he says, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty.

Now the point that I'm going to make once I've dealt with God's mercy is the fact that justice and mercy are not opposites, that mercy does not set aside justice, that justice and mercy have to come together. And here you'll see that even though God is merciful, twice in his revelation to Moses he declares that he is merciful, and yet at the same time he says that he forgives, but he does not clear the guilty. Now obviously these are not contradictions.

If he forgives, he forgives those who come to him on the right conditions. But those who do not come to him remain guilty and therefore their guilt remains upon them and they have to suffer the consequences of

their guilt. And so he has been gracious to us if we've come to him.

Those who are unbelieving today and have not come to him remain in their sin and the wrath of God abides upon them. And God is not, and this is the problem, is that the world look at God and they say, well God must set aside his justice because he is the God of mercy and so he must save everybody. Everybody must go to heaven.

But that is not the nature of God. We'll talk about that a little bit later, but just to bring your attention to this verse that he speaks here about the fact that he forgives iniquity and transgression and sin, but he does not clear the guilty. Mercy does not set aside his justice.

In the tabernacle, you remember that the central, the focal point of the tabernacle, although not physically if you measure it, not in the center of the thing because it was towards the back, but was the Ark of the Covenant. And upon the Ark of the Covenant was the mercy seat and that was where God's Shekinah, or God's glory was manifest, was revealed. And so even in the Old Testament in the tabernacle, central to God's revelation of himself is the concept of mercy.

He reveals himself seated, not on the judgment seat, but on the mercy seat. And that's a wonderful concept because even when we look at the Old Testament, we say, well surely he was a God of judgment, but he reveals himself as seated or present. We know that he is not a man, he is not a resident in one place, but that he reveals his glory to be in the place of mercy.

To be in the place of mercy. And of course it was that mercy seat which really was just a slab of gold and then there were the two angels, or the two sheriffs that covered, and that was the area that was sprinkled with blood once a year. In Hebrews chapter 2 it speaks about Jesus as being a faithful and a merciful high priest.

A faithful and a merciful high priest. So not only does he reveal himself in the Old Testament from the beginning as being a God of mercy, but he reveals himself now in his ongoing high priestly ministry. What Jesus is doing today as a faithful and a merciful high priest.

Now he's comparing, the writer to the Hebrews, is comparing Jesus to the earthly priesthood. And the earthly priesthood had very little sympathy for the people and their problems and their weaknesses. They lived in their own little world with being supported by the finances of the people, not having to work, not having to make a living, not having to deal with the day-to-day problems.

And so they lived in this unique little world and in a sort of cloister situation where they were in relationship with God and they had no sympathy for the people. But he says Jesus is not like earthly high priests. He is a merciful and he is a faithful high priest.

He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. And so when we struggle, he feels it. And he is merciful towards us in that situation.

When we fall and stumble, he is merciful. Now there's a difference between mercy and grace and we don't have time this morning and I'm not going to try and separate the two this morning because that will take us a long time. But there is a difference between mercy and grace.

Grace has to do with saving us from sin. Mercy has to do with supporting, strengthening, helping us in our weakness when we are weak. And so mercy has particularly to do with the attitude displayed towards

those who are struggling, to those who are weak, to those who are not making the grade.

And so he is a faithful and a merciful high priest. In Titus chapter 3 you'll find that mercy goes with forgiveness. Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus just before Philemon and Hebrews.

Titus chapter 3 and verse 5. Verse 4. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared. Notice there the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the spirit.

When he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, and having been justified by his grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, he saved us according to his mercy. And so God's mercy towards us stems from his love towards us.

And results in forgiveness. And so he doesn't just feel sorry for us. Notice he doesn't use the word pity.

Although as a father pities his children, so the Lord is gracious to them. We know that verse. And yet at the same time God doesn't just sit there and say, I really feel sorry for you.

But in showing mercy, showing mercy is not just a feeling. Showing mercy has to result in some action. And God in his mercy gives his son the Lord Jesus to die for us.

And so he does something to save us. To bring us out of our pitiful situation. And so God moved by his kindness and his love towards us, displays his mercy in saving us.

But mercy does not just deal with saving us. Mercy does not just deal with forgiveness. God's mercy even results in us being alive and being here this morning.

The book of Lamentations says because of his mercies we are not consumed. We are not consumed. Now this is one of the accusations that unbelievers bring against God.

And they say, well if God is who he is, then how can he allow the world to continue with all of the murder and the rape and the robberies and the death and the wars and all of these things going on. But Lamentations, Jeremiah I believe says, that it is because of his mercies that we are not consumed. God's righteousness and God's justice would require that the earth just be consumed with one word of his power, the whole thing just blown away because it is so rotten and it is so diseased and it is so sick.

But because of his mercy, because he is not willing, Peter says that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. And so because God is merciful to the world, because God is merciful to the unbelievers, because God is merciful to Christians who are half-hearted, he is extending the time of grace and he is waiting for more to come into the kingdom. And so because of his mercy, we are not consumed.

Because of his mercy, we are able to come into his presence and we are not wiped out. And so, mercy spares us. Mercy gives us forgiveness.

In Ephesians chapter 2, a few books back, you will find that mercy is rooted in love. Ephesians chapter 2. We touched on this in Titus, but it is clearer here. Ephesians 2.4 But God who is rich in mercy, God who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved, raised us up together and made us sit

together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So God who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us. God who is rich in mercy because of his love for us. And of course we can talk about the mercy of God and we can talk about how God is merciful and how this works for God, but obviously this needs to work for us.

And so just looking at this in theory is of little value to us. What we need to see is how that this mercy needs to work within us and how that the love of God needs to be shared abroad in our hearts so that we too may be merciful the same way as he is merciful. And then of course the mercy of God is clearly manifest on the cross of Calvary.

There is that hymn, in fact we sang it on Thursday night. Mercy there was great and grace was free. Pardon there was multiplied to me.

There my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary. And so we see on the cross of Calvary God's mercy revealed to us as Jesus dies in our place upon that cruel cross. But we even see the mercy of the Lord Jesus as he says, Father forgive them because they do not know what they do.

No reclamation, no words of reviving again. Remember Peter says that though he was reviled, reviled not again. He doesn't revile again.

He doesn't bring judgment upon. He doesn't bring fire down. He does nothing but he just pleads for their forgiveness.

And we say well that is supernatural. That is something that is not human. And that is exactly what we are talking about.

We are not talking about human kindness. Human kindness would not be able to do that upon the cross of Calvary. It is only God's mercy that would be able to bring us to a place where we are able to say Father even though they have nailed him to the cross, even though they did whatever they did to him there.

He says Father simply forgive them because they do not know what they are doing. Now we have to bring the balance and we said we are going to speak about mercy and justice. And we cannot because there are Christians who want to emphasize the mercy of God and say well because God is merciful and because we must be merciful to one another, because we must be merciful to those who are weak, what we need to do is we need to just look over any form of sin and any form of iniquity.

That doesn't matter because we need to be merciful. Now that is not being merciful. That is being limp wristed.

That is being weak. And let's see what the scripture says about that. In Psalm 85 verse 10 I am sure you know the verse.

It says mercy and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed. Mercy and truth have met together.

Mercy and truth have met together. Now when we gloss over what is wrong, that is not truth. Let's use a non-threatening situation.

When we look at people, when we look at the poverty in the world, or let's say poverty of a Christian. We see another Christian who doesn't have food to eat. And we just ignore the fact.

We just say well that doesn't, you know we just close, you know the way that we sit at the robot and the beggars come and we just don't see them. Now that is not truth. Because they are there.

They are there. Now I am not making a statement about how to deal with the beggars at the robot. But we try to not see the issues.

So in our relationship with one another we have the same problem. Some of us just try to not see the issue. And we say well you know it is not there.

But that is not truth. Mercy and truth have come together. And so truth deals with the reality.

Mercy is part of the response, but not the entire response to that truth and to that reality. If we go to Exodus chapter 20, in fact we don't have to, I will just tell you about that. But remember in Exodus chapter 20 we find the Ten Commandments.

And after I think the third command, the Lord reveals Himself again and He says that He is merciful and that He shows mercy to thousands. So He gives the law and at the same time He says that He is merciful. But then at the same time He says that the soul that sins it must die.

Now these things are not in opposition to one another. They don't cancel one another out. And so God shows mercy to those who avail themselves of His mercy.

But His law and His justice still stands and He will continue to punish those who break His commands and do not avail themselves of His grace and of His mercy. If one looks at the Old Testament for instance, we can find two examples. And we can find examples in the New Testament.

But you remember that Saul was sent to the Amalekites and God says to him destroy the Amalekites because of what they did to Israel when Israel came up from Egypt when they attacked the weak of Israel. And Amalek is a picture of the flesh. And so we know the story how Saul goes against the Amalekites and what does he do with Agag the king of the Amalekites? He shows him mercy.

He spares him. And we say well that's commendable. That's good.

He's doing what we're talking about. He's being merciful. And was he commended for that? No.

He loses his kingdom for that. God rejects him. Not the first time but ultimately, finally now God rejects him.

Because he showed mercy. And of course unbelievers and Christians who don't understand the word have difficulty with this. They say but how can God condemn a man because he showed mercy? But you see justice had to be done.

And justice required for the Amalekites to be destroyed. And because Saul spared Amalek, because he spared Agag, Agag remained a problem although he was then killed by Samuel the prophet. The descendants and that which was spared becomes a problem for Israel and remains a problem for Israel for a long time after that.

You find the same happening with David. Remember David had a son. Scripture says that he was handsome.

He was beautiful. That there was from the tip of his toe to the crown of his head that he was absolutely perfect. And yet Absalom had a nasty streak about him.

And Absalom kills his brother. He felt that he was justified because his brother had raped his sister. But he acted in an unjust way.

And David is very angry with Absalom. But then there are those who plead for Absalom and it takes two years and eventually David forgives Absalom. Now the law required that Absalom should have been killed because he had committed murder.

But Moses does not fulfill the justice or the judgment of the law. He shows mercy to Absalom because he was his son. If it was anybody else, David would probably have had him killed.

But because it was his son, he spares him. And you remember the end of the story. That Absalom then, it doesn't take Absalom very long to gather people around him and to bring about a rebellion against David and eventually brings Israel to civil war as Israelites fight Israelites.

As Moses, as David has to defend his kingdom against his own son, the one that he had shown mercy to. Now God required of him not to show mercy in that case. Now how do we know the difference? Well I can't give you a formula.

That's a very difficult thing. There is no formula between when do we show mercy and when do we extract justice or when do we apply the justice of God. But if we go back and we remember when we spoke about meekness.

Meekness deals with the issue of justifying and defending my rights. And when I'm defending my rights, invariably I don't show mercy. And yet somehow when I'm defending God's truth and God's justice, we tend to be very merciful, which is in fact the wrong way around.

I should extend mercy when it comes to my things and my rights. And I should be absolutely true to the Word and to God's requirements when it comes to His things. But the difference between the two, there is no easy formula.

We need to know God's direction. Even in the application of justice, it needs to be done with mercy. And of course these are very, very difficult things for us to do in the natural.

Matthew chapter 25. Now, when we speak about mercy, mercy, as we've said, deals with putting those and helping those who are in need. Now that need can be a spiritual need, it can be a physical need, it can be in many, many areas.

And in Matthew 25, and we don't have time to go into detail about that, but there's an incorrect teaching that speaks about this as the judging of the nations. He's not dealing with nations, although it says that He brings the nations before Him. The Scripture does not support the concept of judgment of nations as nations, but the judgment of individuals for their individual actions.

That is the principle that the Scripture gives us over and over. The soul that sins, it shall die. We shall give an account every one for himself, it says in Corinthians.

And so the principle of judgment is of individuals, not of groups of people. God is not going to judge denominations as denominations, or churches as churches, or nations or countries as countries, but He judges individuals. But when it says that He brings the nations before Him, He's simply saying all the people.

And in judging, what is the issue, what is the basis of judgment here? It has to do with mercy. Because He says in verse 34, And the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. I was hungry and you gave Me food.

Now, what will cause us to give food to those who are hungry? It's mercy. It's mercy. It's seeing someone in need and being extended in mercy to help that one in being hungry.

I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. It's mercy driven. I was stranger and you took Me in.

I was naked and you clothed Me. I was sick and you visited Me. I was in prison and you came to Me.

He's speaking about the application of mercy. This is the basis of this judgment. Now, I think that we touched on this before, but let me just clarify this point again.

This may seem, will then seem to give or indicate then that salvation is based on works. And so if I am showing merciful works, and so if I'm running a charity, then God's going to save me. If I never give to the poor, then God is not going to save me.

That is not the basis of salvation. We understand that the basis of salvation is on the basis of the finished work of the cross of Calvary. That if I believe in Him, I will not perish, but have everlasting life.

So, what is He dealing with here now then? What has this got to do with it? Well, remember that we said that mercy is the result of a changed nature. Mercy is not something I have by nature. Mercy is something, the mercy of God is something that comes when I'm born again, and the nature of God is imparted to me.

So, why did these people show mercy? Because they were changed. Because God's mercy became real to them. Why did the others not show mercy? Because they were not born again.

They were unchanged. They were unregenerate. And so there was no pity.

There was no softness in their heart towards those who were in need. And so, these things that He is speaking about here are simply consequences or results or fruits of being born again. And so, if I am born again, you'll find the same principle in the book of Revelation, when it says that outside are liars.

Does that then mean that that's the basis of salvation? If I don't lie, I'll go to heaven, and if I lie, I won't go to heaven. No. Those who are outside and who are liars and whoremongers and all of the other things that He mentions there, that is simply a consequence, that is simply evidence of the fact that I'm not born again.

If I do not speak the truth, if I find that I have a difficulty with the truth, and I trust I'm not putting a burden on you this morning, but if I have difficulty with speaking the truth, there is a question mark as to whether I'm born again. Because the essence of being born again is that I'm brought into truth, and that I come to know Him who is the truth and the life and the way. And so, lying, sin, is evidence of an unregenerate nature.

Unmercifulness is evidence of an unregenerate nature. Showing mercy, on the other hand, loving holiness, is evidence of being born again. That's simply what, and I know that this is a huge subject, and I just want to introduce that to you, but to try and explain this passage.

And so, why are they commended? Because they are showing evidence of the fact that they've been changed by the Lord, and so they are showing mercy. And so, judgment is based on showing mercy. In the book of James, chapter 2, verse 13, it says, Judgment is without mercy to the one who shows no mercy.

Judgment is without mercy to the one who shows no mercy. And so, showing mercy must be evidenced in our lives. It's not an optional thing we can screw on and bolt on to our lives, you know, like we spoke about putting a bull bar on and a tow bar and a radio.

It's just one of those nice extra things you put on to your Christianity. No, mercy is the essence of what it's all about. And so, he says that judgment is without mercy to the one who shows no mercy.

Let's go to Matthew, chapter 6, and what I want to do is briefly look at the various ways then in which mercy is evidenced. How do I evidence mercy? How do I show mercy in my life? Matthew, chapter 6, and this is still part of the Beatitudes. In verse 22, the lamp of the body is the eye.

Therefore, if your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness? Now, what has that got to do with mercy? Well, it's got everything to do with mercy.

The problem we have with these two verses is that, because most people haven't bothered to interpret these two scriptures by other scripture, and have tried to give it an interpretation outside of scripture, most Christians have an incorrect understanding of what these two verses mean. So, I need to take a few minutes just to try and explain what these two verses mean. You'll see here that he is speaking about material things.

Verse 19, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. Verse 21, For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Then, there's these two verses, verses 22 and 23.

And then verse 24 says, No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. He cannot serve God and Mammon, or the God of money, at the same time.

Then, verse 25, through to the end of the chapter, he speaks about material things, and worrying about material things about tomorrow. So, this whole section, from verse 19 through to verse 34, is dealing with material things, with issues of money, and with clothing, and with food. And then, right in the middle are these two verses, 22 and 23, which seem to have nothing to do with material things.

Can you see the problem? Now, we then have to assume then, that maybe these things do, maybe those two verses do have something to do with material things. And, if we read the scriptures correctly, and you read the passage, and you say, but this does not fit in to this passage, if I apply the normal interpretation to this verse, maybe I need to find another interpretation. That's what happened to me.

I read that, and I said, but how does this fit in with my treasure? How does this deal fit in with serving money? How does this fit in with worrying about material things for tomorrow? And then, if you go to the

book of Deuteronomy, chapter 15, you'll find the explanation. And so, scripture must be interpreted by scripture. You can't just give it a meaning that you think it means.

And so, when you say, well, if your eye is evil, and so people will speak about having a positive outlook on life, and having a negative outlook on life. That's a good eye and an evil eye. But the scripture doesn't give us that meaning.

Nowhere in scripture can you find that meaning. But in Deuteronomy, chapter 15, and verse 8, let's read from verse 7. If there is among you a poor man of your brethren within any of your gates in your land, which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your brother. So, what's he talking about? Mercy.

Being merciful to those who are in need. Now, let me just say that he's speaking here about your brethren. In other words, fellow Jews.

Just to go back to Matthew, chapter 23. Matthew 23, where he says that I was in prison, and you visited me. I was hungry, and you fed me.

I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink. He's not dealing with general social responsibility. He's not talking about charitable deeds to unbelievers.

If you read Matthew 23 carefully, they'll say to him, but Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? And what would he say? If you've done this to the least of these my brethren, my brethren. Now, it doesn't mean that we must be irresponsible towards unbelievers who are in need. But you cannot use Matthew 23 to teach social responsibility to unbelievers.

Matthew 23 deals with our social responsibility towards Christians who are hungry, who are starving, who are thirsty, who are in prison. And you say, well, he couldn't, shouldn't be a Christian and be in prison. Well, there are many Christians in prison.

Maybe because they were Christians before the time, but they weren't good Christians, so they ended up in prison. Many of them become Christians during prison. But also remember that many thousands of Christians are in prison for their faith today.

And so, when did we see you in that position? He says, if you've done it to the least of these my brethren. And so, Jesus is dealing with mercy towards those who are Christians. And so, again, he says, if you see your brother in need, and you don't help him out, he'll harden your heart.

And then verse 8, But if you shall open your hand wide to him, and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Now look at verse 9. Beware lest there be in you a wicked thought in your heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand. And your eye be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing.

And he cry out to the Lord against you, and it become sin amongst you. You shall surely give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him. Because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works, and in all that which you put your hand.

Now, just to explain the reference to the seventh year. Remember the seventh year was the year of jubilee. So, if you lend somebody something, on the seventh year it was to be written off.

You were to write the debt off. And so, the problem was that if it was close to the seventh year, and you said, well now, if I lend you this money to help you out, next year I'm going to have to write it off. So, I have no opportunity of recovering my debt.

And so, maybe I'll not do it. He says, don't bring that into your reckoning. Don't bring it into, whether the man can repay or can't repay, that's got nothing to do with it.

But you'll see the reference there too, your eye be evil. So, there are other references in the Old Testament, and in Jewish thinking, when you speak about someone who has an evil eye, you mean someone who is mean-fisted or tight-fisted. When you speak about someone who has a good eye, you mean someone who is generous.

And so, Jesus says in Matthew, that if I have an evil eye, it will affect the whole of me. In other words, if I'm not touched by the plight of those in need, it will affect the whole of me. And so, the showing of mercy has to do with physical needs.

The showing of mercy has to do with spiritual needs. We see people with spiritual problems, issues that they are struggling with, and we just withdraw from them, we just leave them, we don't show mercy to them, we don't extend ourselves in order to help them in their time of spiritual need. We are not being merciful.

We show mercy towards those who are lost. Remember, it's easy for us to say, well, he made his bed, he must lie in it. It's easy for us to say, well, you know, he didn't believe on the Lord Jesus, so he must suffer.

But Jesus never, on the cross of Calvary, could have had every right to say, look, Father, they've brought what's coming to them upon themselves. But he says, Father, be merciful to them, forgive them, because they don't know what they're doing. Stephen does exactly the same.

As they stoned him for his faith, as they stoned him because he preached the truth to them, he says, Father, forgive them, forgive them. That's showing mercy. And showing mercy to unbelievers.

Showing mercy to even Christians who are disobedient and wayward. We need to find the grace of God to be merciful to those who are lost and those who are going astray. We show mercy in praying for others.

The ministry of the Lord Jesus as a faithful, as a merciful and faithful high priest. What is he doing for us? Just sitting in heaven and saying, well, I feel very sorry for you. No, he's praying for me.

He's interceding for me. Praying that the Father, that my strength do not fail, he says to Peter. He doesn't just look at Peter and say, well, Peter, I see you've got lots of issues.

And Peter, I know you're really struggling, but I just feel very sorry for you. No, Jesus says, I prayed the Father that your faith fail not. And so we show mercy by praying for one another and praying for those who are in need.

In Jude, verse 21 and 23, he speaks about showing mercy in the preaching of the gospel. Saving people from hell. Plucking them out of the fire, so to speak.

And he says, even if we have to use fear in order to do that, we need to do that. That's showing mercy. And so, you know, there are Christians today or there are preachers today who don't want to preach about hell because they say that's being unmerciful.

That's being unkind to speak about hell. But Jude says that if necessary, I must preach about hell because in preaching about hell, I'm showing mercy in warning the unbeliever of the consequences of his way. And so preaching about hell, preaching about the judgment and the righteousness of God, preaching about holiness is part of showing mercy.

Because I'm warning people that there is a way that seems right unto man, but the end thereof is destruction. In Titus chapter 1, maybe we can look at that verse, just before Hebrews, Titus chapter 1. Verse 10 says, For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not to for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, says, Christians are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. And so part of showing mercy is rebuking if necessary.

And so if we bring up our children and we allow them to go wild, we spoil them by not disciplining them, by not training them, we are not showing mercy to them. We are being unmerciful, because in fact we are preparing them for judgment. We are preparing them for a life of disaster.

But by rebuking them when they are wrong, we are showing mercy. Now again, the world's concept says, but that cannot be merciful. You've just got to say, that's fine, you do your own thing, you find your own way.

That's not being merciful. And so there are many scriptures in the New Testament that require of us to rebuke those who are, or to admonish, or to correct those who are going astray. That's part of showing mercy.

And yet we want to say, no, no, if you're going to show mercy, let everything just happen. And anything is okay, everything is fine. That's not truth.

And that's not showing mercy. Mercy speaks the truth, but speaks it with love. Remember, mercy and truth have met together, justice and love have kissed one another.

And then finally in Matthew chapter 6, the last scripture I'm going to take you to, and remember that Matthew 6 is still part of the Sermon on the Mount, and so at the same time when Jesus was, you know, Matthew chapter 6, and we have here the model prayer, and verse 11, Give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And then verse 14, For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. Showing mercy to those who have sinned against us.

Probably one of the most difficult things, forgiving others when they have wronged us. And then of course in Matthew chapter 18, Jesus tells the parable of the two men, the one who was forgiven a great debt by his master, an insurmountable debt. And you'll read, if you read that passage, read it when you go home, you'll find that it says that his master had pity on him.

His master was merciful to him, and he forgives him his debt. And then he goes out and he finds his fellow servant who owes him a small debt. And he grabs him by the throat and has him thrown in debtors jail, and he shows him no mercy whatsoever.

And then the Lord Jesus says that the owner hears about this, and he takes that wicked servant and he throws him into prison. And then he says, this is what the Father will do if you do not show mercy to one another. And folks, when we understand the great mercy that God has shown to us, not just shown to us at the cross of Calvary, that he continues to show to us, how can we not be merciful to those who are in need? When we understand how desperately needy we have been and continue to be.

And that's why these Beatitudes flow one into the other. And so when I am poor in spirit, when I understand my poverty, it's no problem to have mercy on others who are spiritually disadvantaged, spiritually poor, because I understand my great poverty. And I understand the tremendous mercy that God showed upon me.

When I mourn truly for my own lacks, for my own weaknesses, for my own issues, for my own failures, for my own spiritual poverty, it's not a problem to be merciful to others, because I understand that I have nothing that I didn't receive from him in the first place. When I've surrendered fully to God and I've become truly meek, being merciful is not a problem, because I don't have to assert my rights, but I'm able to show mercy. And then the fourth one, the Beatitude before this one, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

When I want to see righteousness being done, when someone is suffering in an unjust way, unfairly, at the hand of the devil, at the hand of the world, at the hand of circumstance, I have to be moved by compassion for those people. You know, a scripture that touches me deeply when I consider the Lord Jesus, and it says that when he saw the multitudes come to Samaria, it says that he was moved with compassion for them, because there were a sheep without a shepherd. He was moved with compassion for them.

And he shows mercy by presenting to them the kingdom. So God give us grace that the mercy of God may be real to them. Blessed are the merciful, happy are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

So when I'm truly merciful, God's mercy becomes abundant in my life. God give us grace that this may be real. It's easy to talk about these things.

It's another thing to do them. It's one thing to understand the theory, and I don't even know whether we fully understand the theory. It's another thing to do it and to put it into practice.

But God give us grace that this may be real.

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