

Only Those Who Are Merciful to Others Will Obtain Mercy From God

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the danger of self-deception, particularly in spiritual matters, and the importance of examining our own lives and actions to avoid falling into this trap. It highlights the need for sacrificial love as evidence of true belief in being forgiven by God, contrasting the Pharisees' self-righteousness with the humble actions of a repentant woman. The message stresses the significance of showing mercy to others as a reflection of understanding and receiving God's mercy, with a warning about the consequences of lacking mercy towards fellow human beings.

Duration: 20:01

Scripture: Galatians 6:3, Luke 7:37, James 2:13, Matthew 5:7, Matthew 6:15

Topics: "Self-Deception", "Mercy and Forgiveness"

Description

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Transcript

There are a number of places in the New Testament where we are warned not to deceive ourselves. We are careful not to let other people deceive us. You know, we're all very careful with money.

We don't want to be cheated because we value it. Here's one example. Galatians 6.3, where we're told if anyone thinks he's a somebody, that means if anyone thinks he's quite spiritual, when he's really not that spiritual, he deceives himself.

You think we are in danger of that? I think every Christian is in danger of it. So the solution is, verse four, each one must examine his own work. Not which church you go to, not what doctrine you believe, but what has come out of your life.

How do you live at home? That's the first work we must examine. How do you live with your husband and your wife and your children? How have you brought up your children? These are the ways we can be protected from deceiving ourselves. And it's very easy to imagine that we love the Lord a lot.

And we all like to think that. Here is a story from Jesus' earthly life, which can help us to be protected from self-deception in that area. In Luke chapter seven, we read that Jesus was reclining at a table in the house of a Pharisee, verse 37.

Luke 7.37. And there was this woman who was a sinner, which means an immoral woman, probably, most probably a prostitute, was converted. And she came and stood behind Jesus, verse 38, and wept and wiped his feet with her tears, Luke 7.38, and wiped it with the, wet it with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and anointed his feet with perfume. Now the Pharisees are the ones who thought they were quite spiritual, mainly because they knew the scriptures so well.

I believe that many of us in this church, because we have heard so many messages and heard so much on YouTube as well, our knowledge of scripture and of accurate theology is pretty good, more than I would say the average Christian in many other churches. And that's what can make us Pharisees to think that because we know the scripture so well, and we can explain it so well, and we know where the verses are, we're spiritual. That is one of the primary marks of the Pharisee.

Now he, and when we are like that, we are very quick in judging others who are doing something slightly wrong, not the way we do it. You could judge a sister who doesn't veil her head, or doesn't veil it sufficiently, or someone who comes and sits with a cap, a man who comes and sits with a cap in the church. These things stopped disturbing me ages ago, because I know those are not the main things.

I always say, he doesn't have light. It's okay. There's so many things that can disturb a Pharisee.

If these little, little things disturb you, my brother, sister, please examine yourself, whether you are a Pharisee or pretty close to Pharisees. So he was disturbed, because according to scripture, a woman like that should not be touching a prophet. And he never said anything.

You don't have to say anything. He says in verse 39, he said to himself, he saw this person who was the holiest man walking on earth, Jesus, and he had an inward judgment of him. A Pharisee can judge even the most spiritual person, because he wants to find some fault in them.

He said, if this man was really a prophet, he would know what sort of woman is touching, verse 39. And Jesus discerned that, and he said, Simon, I've got something to say to you. The money lender had two debtors, one owed 500 denarii, verse 41, and another 50, and they were, he forgave them both.

Who will love him more? And Simon answered, the one whom he forgave more. He said, that's right. And do you know why this woman has poured out that expensive perfume? Perfume was very expensive.

And she, all the money she saved, she brought it and poured it out at the Lord's feet. Simon only gave him a meal. And you see this woman, you didn't even give me water to wash my feet, verse 44, but she has wiped it with her hair and wet it with her tears.

You did not anoint my hand, but she's anointed my feet, verse 46. It's because, let me paraphrase, because she has been forgiven much, she loves much. I don't think any of us will say I'm a saint.

No, we know that would be spiritual pride. And most of us would say, oh, I'm just a sinner saved by grace. That's such a spiritual thing to say, right? It's so spiritual to say, I'm just a sinner saved by grace.

If you really are, and if you really believe that, that you are a terrible sinner, saved by the grace of God, your life will be manifested in an outpouring of sacrificial love for Christ and sacrificing many things in your life. That would be the proof that you believe your sins, which are many, have been forgiven. The reason you sacrifice so little to the Lord is because you don't feel you're being forgiven much.

That's what Jesus said here. This woman felt that she's been forgiven such a lot, that she took her entire life savings, and she was a poor woman, and poured it out of the feet of the Lord. She didn't think it was anything great.

She's been forgiven so much, so what is there if I take my life savings and pour it out of the Lord's feet? So how much we sacrifice in our life for the Lord and for his people and for the church is a pretty good identifying mark of how much you really believe that you're a sinner saved by grace. Otherwise, it's just a bias statement. So I've thought about this, you know, because in the, and I would say another thing is you could see in Simon's attitude here a lack of mercy towards others.

That's another characteristic of people who don't feel they've been forgiven much. They're not very merciful to others. In the final day when we stand before the Lord to be judged, one thing we will really require and earnestly desire is mercy from the Lord for the failures which there were in our life, which we were not aware of or the lacks.

If you're really walking with the Lord, you will be constantly discovering areas of your life where there's a lack and we need the Lord's mercy and there's a verse which says in the final day if you want mercy from the Lord, it's a great verse. I don't know whether you've observed it in James chapter 2. That's what Simon the Pharisee did not have towards this sinful woman. In James chapter 2, it says in verse 13, judgment that's from the Lord will be without any mercy to someone who has not shown mercy to others because mercy triumphs over judgment.

That means in the final day, God's mercy will triumph over his judgment of you if, there's a big if, in your earthly life you showed mercy to other people. Mercy means you forgave others no matter what they did. You're ready to forgive, quick to forgive.

You didn't hold grudges in your heart against anybody. That's being merciful and you overlook the mistakes they make. You know how sometimes even a husband and wife, they can be pretty unmerciful to each other.

They can be so demanding. They expect your husband or your wife to be perfect, never to make a mistake and if they slip up, there are husbands and wives who quickly say, why do you do that? I mean that's an important message you got on the phone and you didn't tell me. Be merciful brother, sister to each other.

If you really believe you're a sinner saved by grace, you'll be merciful. You wouldn't be yelling at your husband or wife like that. Not at all because you realize deep down your heart, it's not just a word that comes out of your mouth.

You're deep down in your heart. You're absolutely convinced that you are a rotten sinner to whom God showed tremendous mercy that whatever wrong your husband or wife does, you say it's okay. We all

make mistakes.

It's okay. Perfectly okay. Don't worry.

Don't worry about it. The world is not going to collapse because that thing you didn't tell me that or you didn't do that. It's perfectly okay.

If the food is not up to your mark, it's amazing how many people get upset with that with their wife just because something's not up to the mark. If you examine your life, I believe there are a lot of areas you will discover. You don't really believe you're a sinner saved by grace.

It's just a pious word you can use to impress others. If you were like that, you'd be very merciful. Your anger will be reduced to zero.

I tell you, I was a person who had a lot of anger in the early days of my Christian life, even in the early days of my marriage. I can honestly say before God, for the glory of God, it's disappeared. It's disappeared completely mainly because the Lord showed me what a rotten sinner I was and how much he forgave me.

Be merciful to everyone. Any of you who have a problem with anger, I want to say to you, my dear brother, sister, just meditate on how merciful God has been good to you and good and merciful to you. It says here in the final day, God's judgment will be overruled by his mercy.

Towards whom? Towards the one who has shown mercy to others. But in the final day, if a man comes up to the Lord for judgment and God has seen his life, he was absolutely pretty hard on people and not being merciful. He says judgment will overrule mercy over that person.

It's a question of which will triumph in the final day in your life, God's judgment or God's mercy that entirely depends on how you are towards other people today. The coming of the Lord is near. I believe that more and more it's impressed on my heart.

We are moving towards the coming of the Lord, especially with this pandemic and in the book of Revelation, you read about such pandemics where people curse God because he's got control over these pandemics and he doesn't stop them. You know, there's a verse like that in Revelation 16, which says God has got control over these things and he doesn't stop them, Revelation 16.9. So people, it says in that verse that God allows these pandemics to lead people to repentance, but they don't repent. I find also, you know, when we speak evil about other people behind their back, when you discuss about people and you say things which are very negative about others, you have to ask yourself whether you really believe you're a sinner saved by grace.

At that moment, that thing which you publicly proclaim, yeah, I'm just a sinner saved by grace. At that moment, ask yourself, do you really believe that? If you did, you'd be a little more merciful in your assessment of that person and the way you speak about that person, because he too is a sinner saved by grace or maybe not yet saved. So I find this is a very, very important thing to bear in mind.

It's one of those beatitudes which we don't think about much in Matthew 5. In Matthew 5, Jesus said among all those beatitudes, you know, Matthew 5 verse 3 to 9, 3 to 10. The one in the middle is blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. So not everybody is going to get mercy.

We may think we'll all get it, but I'll tell you, everybody's not going to get it. Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy. The other day I was thinking about, I was, I've often said there are only two sins mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus mentioned they'll go to hell.

Hell is mentioned only twice in the Sermon on the Mount. One is in relation to anger. If you keep on, you take your anger lightly, it says in verse 21, it ultimately ends up in the fiery hell.

Anger step one, anger step two, anger step three is hell. Anger will lead to hell. It's equal to the old covenant.

Old covenant murder is new covenant anger. Every time you get angry, consider yourself like an old covenant murderer. You take it like that, I tell you, you'll get victory pretty soon.

You look down on somebody who kills another, Jesus says, if you're in the new covenant, anger is just the same. Verse 21, 22. The other is lusting with your eyes.

You judge someone who's committed adultery, and he says, well, if you lust with your eyes, it's the same, and that can lead you to hell too. Verse 29, I thought it was only those two, but the other day it struck me there was one more, and that is a lack of mercy. The unmerciful man goes to hell.

Matthew 6, verse 15. If you do not forgive others, your father will not forgive your sins, period. And if you die without your sins being forgiven, where do you go? I hope you know the gospel.

There is no second chance. It's appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment. Hebrews 9, 27.

So if I have died without having forgiven somebody, somebody who did me a terrible hurt or hurt one of my children pretty badly, or say molested your daughter, or I don't know what, some terrible thing somebody did to you, and you say, I just don't forgive that fellow. I mean, we can be hard on people who did things much less than molesting your daughters, and you die like that. I want to ask you, face up to scripture honestly.

Jesus said, heaven and earth will pass away. My word will not pass away. If you do not forgive others, your father will not forgive you, and you die.

Where will you go? That's the third place where hell is mentioned in the New Testament, in the Sermon on the Mount. Mercy triumphs over judgment if you have been merciful to others. Jesus said, blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.

This is far, far more important than you think. This matter of forgiving others for some reason or the other, I find the Lord's been emphasizing it to me to preach very many times the last six months, and it's not because I plan to do it. It's just the Lord reminds me to keep on doing it, which is an indication to me we are nearing the coming of the Lord.

Be ready, brothers and sisters. Be merciful to others.

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