



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS



Have Mercy!

Tim Badal | October 27, 2013 | Matthew 5:7

The Upside-down Kingdom Series, Lessons Learned from the Sermon on the Mount, Part 5

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5. We're in a series entitled "The Upside-down Kingdom" studying lessons from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus begins his sermon by talking about eight concepts called the beatitudes which He calls all His followers to live out in both word and deed. We are looking at each of these beatitudes—these Kingdom attitudes—that Jesus has given us one at a time. Now we come to the beatitude of mercy.

As we approach the fifth Kingdom attitude, we pivot away from the beatitudes that focus primarily on ourselves and our relationships with God. We turn instead to the idea of our relationships with others—our lives within society and the world. We're going to look at how we can be more merciful in the very merciless world in which we live. We're going to learn that we are called to show mercy. Not only that, but the same level of mercy which we show the world is the level of mercy we will receive from God because we are told that we will be blessed. We will find approval from God in a life that pursues God through these beatitudes.

Let's look at what God's Word has to say. Look at Matthew 5:1-7:

- 1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.
- 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
- 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

Let's pray.

Lord, my prayer is short, yet I hope it is so sweet to You. Thank You the mercy You have shown us. While we were dead in our trespasses and sin, You saved us by grace because of Your great mercy for us. Let us do likewise to the world around us. I pray that we'd be challenged through these words to show mercy in all the ways that You've called us to do. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Let me share a story with you from CNN on March 9, 2013:

"The pilot glanced outside his cockpit and froze. He blinked hard and looked again, hoping it was just a mirage but his copilot stared at the same horrible vision.

'Oh my goodness, this must be a nightmare!' the copilot said.

'He's going to destroy us!' the pilot agreed.

The two men were looking at a gray German Messerschmitt fighter hovering just three feet off their wing tip. It was five days before Christmas 1943 and the fighter had closed in on their crippled American B-17 bomber for the kill.

The B-17 pilot, Charles Brown, was a 21-year-old West Virginia farm boy on his first combat mission. His bomber had been shot to pieces by swarming fighters and his plane was alone in the skies above Germany. Half his crew had been wounded and the tail gunner was dead, his blood frozen in icicles over the machine guns.

But when Brown and his copilot, Spencer "Pinky" Luke, looked at the fighter pilot again something odd happened. The German didn't pull the trigger. He nodded at Brown instead. What happened next was one of the most remarkable acts of chivalry recorded during World War II. Years later Brown would track down his would-be executioner for a reunion that reduced both men to tears."

Now let's hear the other side of the story:

Revenge, not honor, is what drove Second Lieutenant Franz Stigler to jump into his fighter that chilly December day in 1943. Stigler wasn't just any fighter pilot. He was an ace. One more kill and he would win The Knights Cross, Germany's highest award for valor.

Yet Stigler was driven by something deeper than glory. His older brother, August, was a fellow Luftwaffe pilot who had been killed earlier in the war. American pilots had killed Stigler's comrades and were bombing his country's cities.

Stigler was standing near his fighter on a German airbase when he heard a bomber's engine. Looking up he saw a B-17 flying so low it looked like it was going to land. As the bomber disappeared behind some trees Stigler tossed his cigarette aside, saluted a ground crewman and took off in pursuit.

As Stigler's fighter rose to meet the bomber, he decided to attack it from behind. He climbed behind the sputtering bomber, squinted into his gun sight and placed his hand on the trigger. He was about to fire when he hesitated. Stigler was baffled. No one in the bomber fired at him.

He looked closer at the tail gunner. He was still, his white fleece collar soaked with blood. Stigler craned his neck to examine the rest of the bomber. Its skin had been peeled away by shells, its guns knocked out. He could see men huddled together inside the plane tending to the wounds of other crewmen. Then he nudged his plane alongside the bomber's wings and locked eyes with the pilot whose eyes were wide with shock and horror.

Stigler pressed his hand over the rosary that he kept in his flight jacket. He eased his index finger off the trigger. He couldn't shoot. It would be murder.

Stigler wasn't just motivated by vengeance that day. He also lived by a code. He could trace his family's ancestry to knights in 16th century Europe. He had once studied to be a priest.

A German pilot who spared the enemy though risked death in Nazi Germany. If someone reported him, he would be executed. Yet Stigler could also hear the voice of his commanding officer who once told him, "You follow the rules of war for you—not your enemy. You fight by rules to keep your humanity."

Along with the crippled bomber, Stigler changed his mission. He nodded at the American pilot and began flying in formation so German anti-aircraft gunners on the ground wouldn't shoot down the slow moving bomber. Stigler escorted the bomber over the North Sea and took one last look at the American pilot. Then he saluted him, peeled his fighter away and returned to Germany.

"Good luck," Stigler said to himself. "You're in God's hands."

Stigler was able to recognize the common humanity of the enemy when he locked eyes with Brown. It caused him to take mercy.

Stigler's original mission—focused on death—became a mission focused on mercy. Stories like this warm our hearts because they show that there is hope in the world.

Let me give you a little more hope. The article went on to explain that those two men later met and became the best of friends. They went on a cruise together with their wives, became avid fishing partners and went on to see each other every couple of years. Mercy has a way of turning enemies into friends.

The fifth beatitude shows us that Jesus wants to move in our hearts so we will be merciful. That is easier said than done. We live in a merciless world, not a merciful one. This is countercultural. We live in a justice-seeking, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth world that is bent on holding grudges. This world tells those who are in need to "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps." It says, "If you have a problem with me, you're going to hear from my lawyer." This is the society in which we live.

Even in this world that is so determined to not show mercy, Jesus turns our world upside down again with this beatitude. He reminds us that we are called to be merciful and will be blessed when we follow that calling.

Why in the world would we follow this mission that is so countercultural? Jesus reminds us that God will not show mercy to us unless we show mercy to those around us. I don't know about you but I need mercy from God. I know I have offended our holy and just God. Yet God shows me His mercy each day.

So how do we begin to live out this beatitude? There are four questions I want to answer:

What does the word "mercy" mean?

Where is mercy modeled for us?

In what ways is mercy mandated for all Christians?

Where is mercy to be manifested towards others?

1. What Does the Word “Mercy” Mean?

This is so important to our discussion, Village Bible Church. We have to know what it means so that we may strive to live it out, so let’s look at the heart of the word “mercy.”

In Hebrew, “mercy” (cheched) spoke of an emotional response that comes when we are brought face-to-face with the needs of others. In Greek, “mercy” (eleos) spoke of an emotion that literally came from the bowels. In other words, mercy came from the heart—the very depths—of the human being. It was not just a surface emotion but one that cut to the heart.

Mercy has also been defined as “good will toward the afflicted joined with a desire to relieve them.” Popular radio preacher Chuck Swindoll says that “mercy is God’s ministry to the miserable.”

While each of those definitions helps us begin to understand the term, the definition I would like to use comes from Bible scholar William Barclay. Barclay defines mercy as “the ability to get right inside the other person’s skin until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind and feel things with his feelings so as to move and act on behalf of those who are hurting.”

That’s a good working definition. Some of you might say, “Tim, we talk about mercy all the time. We just don’t use the word because we use a more theological word: grace. Aren’t grace and mercy the same?” No, they aren’t. While they have similar ideas and thoughts, they are distinctly different.

I want to show you the difference between grace and mercy.

- Grace is God’s solution to man’s sin. Mercy is God’s solution to man’s misery.
- Grace covers the sin while mercy removes the pain.
- Grace is unearned favor which saves us while mercy is the undeserved favor which forgives us.
- Grace deals with the cause of sin while mercy deals with the symptoms of sin.
- Grace offers pardon for the crime. Mercy offers relief from the punishment.
- Grace cures the disease while mercy eliminates the pain of the disease.
- Regarding salvation, grace says, “Heaven.” Regarding salvation, mercy says, “No hell.”
- Grace says, “I pardon you” while mercy says, “I pity you.”

2. Where Is Mercy Modeled for Us?

Once we understand what mercy is and how it affects our lives, we then need to ask where is mercy modeled for us. We have a working definition that says mercy is literally getting into someone else’s skin to be able to see what they’re seeing, feel what they’re feeling and think about what they’re thinking. Then we have that sympathetic and empathetic feeling of walking a mile in their shoes because we are with them. Ultimately we see and respond to their need. Where in the world do we see this kind of mercy? We can look throughout our lives and see acts of mercy. I’m sure many of you have done acts of mercy in your life, but this isn’t what Jesus means. Jesus isn’t saying, “When it is convenient for you—when you have time or it’s around the holidays—I want you to show mercy.” No. He’s saying, “I want you to live a lifestyle of mercy. Blessed are the merciful.” They are filled up to the brim with mercy—not just once a year but every day of the year.

Once in a while we see a lifestyle of mercy like Jesus commands. One example is Mother Teresa. She was a wonderful woman who ministered out of a heart for God. She had a heart for the people who lived in squalor in the streets of Calcutta, India and therefore gave her life to caring for the orphans. She performed acts of mercy day in and day out. She demonstrated loving mercy in such a way as to love those who were unlovable at times.

Another example is the group who is leaving here soon to take a trip of mercy to Haiti. They will be taking care of orphans who are in need. We also support many mission organizations who model mercy on a daily basis by ministering to those who are in need.

While all those are great examples, I like Bill Bright's comment. The founder of Campus Crusade Ministries said, "God is the grand master of mercy." When we look to see who models mercy, we should look to God. He is the God of mercy. He is so utterly merciful, Lamentations 3:22-23 tells us that His mercies "...are new every morning..." In other words, right when you think you've gotten down to the bottom of the barrel of God's mercies another day rolls around and He says, "Here's a new barrel of mercies for you to enjoy." God is a merciful God.

We See It in the Person of God

As a way of proving this point, I'm going to read a number of scriptures to you. You can look to them as an encouragement of this truth.

- Deuteronomy 4:31 says, "For the Lord your God is a merciful God."
- Nehemiah 9:31 says, "Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God."
- Psalms 119:132 says, "Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name."
- Daniel 9:18 says, "For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy."
- Micah 7:18-19 says, "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

You might say, "That sounds great. I only ever hear judgment from the Old Testament God, so it's to hear about mercy from Him too." God was a God of mercy in the Old Testament and still is in the New Testament.

- Speaking of salvation, Romans 9:16 says, "So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy."
- In Ephesians, we see that we were alienated from God and were dead in our trespasses and sin but the Scripture goes on to say in Ephesians 2:4-5, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."
- Romans 5:8 tells us, "...that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- James 5:11 says, "the Lord is compassionate and merciful."

These verses remind us of one foundational truth: if we want to be merciful and show mercy in the days to come, we can't just get up and say, "Well, I'm going to be better at being merciful." It means we have to be in tune with the source of mercy: God Himself.

Now remember, God's mercy is always balanced by His other attributes. God's mercy is held in a perfect and righteous balance with His justice and wrath. Yet we repeatedly see God withholding His judgments, treating us with care and moving closely to us in our desperate states. He shows us mercy because—as Scripture says—He desires for His mercies to be new every morning.

We can understand many of these verses but then get lost in the esoteric and theoretical idea of our spiritual God showing us mercy. We say, "Well, that's easy for You, God. You don't live in the world like I do. You don't work with the people that I do. You don't understand the situation I'm in with my spouse. You want me to show mercy? It's easy for You to say that from the peanut gallery. What about the reality of living in this dog-eat-dog world?"

We See It in the Patience of Jesus

Not only is mercy seen in the Person of God but also in the patience of Jesus Christ. When we talk about Jesus in His incarnation, we can see great examples of His mercy. Jesus had to deal with the same world and the same types of people as we do. Jesus was God with human flesh, yet He was patient as He walked in this world. He showed patience and love because of His mercy. We see that mercy demonstrated with three different types of people:

1. Jesus showed patience and mercy to the desperate. There were crowds repeatedly pressing in on Jesus, asking Him to come, minister and heal them. Some of these people were desperate because of issues that they had no control over. For example, some of them had diseases and ailments from birth.

There were also those who were desperate because of situations that resulted from their own doing—their own sin. Yet we see Jesus showed mercy to all of them. What a reminder that is for us! I confess to you that when I see people who are in need of mercy, I quickly go to what I call discernment—which is really a judgmental attitude. I ask, "Are they in that situation because of something they've done?" But Jesus showed mercy to all: those who had no responsibility for their desperation as well as those who caused every part in it. Jesus showed mercy and love with no discrimination.

Jesus never said, "Alright, enough is enough. I can't deal with you desperate people anymore." There are Sundays when my own patience as a shepherd is lacking. I just want to go home. Jesus never did that because He is far more merciful than I am. Jesus was willing to deal with the dysfunctions and the hurts of people. He was patient with hurting people because He was filled with compassion when He saw the crowd. He didn't see them as problem people. Because of His mercy, He saw opportunities to alleviate their hurts and pains and to love them.

2. Jesus showed mercy to His detractors. It's easy to help those who are hurting. No doubt our hearts are filled with mercy when we go into the city, or even some places around here, and see people hurting. Maybe we even get beyond some of our judgmental attitudes about why they are hurting and help alleviate the pain they are feeling. That's easy to do. But we see in Scripture that Jesus showed mercy even to His detractors: the chief priest, scribes and Pharisees. Jesus knew what they were doing, knew what their plan of action was and that they wanted Him dead.

Yet look at how Jesus responded to them. He showed them love and mercy. Jesus never spoke ill of them behind their backs, never gossiped about them and never spread rumors about them. Every time He had a difficult word to share, He did it with respect, giving them the opportunity to respond. He dialogued with them.

As the God of the universe, I would not have been so merciful! I would have said, "You know what? You're a pain! I don't like you! I want nothing to do with you so be gone!" Jesus must have thought, "I know you're going to kill Me. All you want to do is get a hand on Me and beat the tar out of Me."

If I was Jesus, there would have been no mention of the scribes and Pharisees in the Bible. The first time they messed with me, kaboom! Goodbye. My dad used to say, "I brought you into this world; I can take you out!" Jesus could have said that. He could have said, "I don't want anything to do with you so just be gone." But He didn't do that. He was patient with them and even gave them opportunities to repent. What a great reminder this is for us that even our greatest enemies deserve mercy.

3. Jesus showed mercy to His disciples. It is hard to show mercy to our enemies but it is equally hard to show mercy to those who are closest to us because we lose our patience with them. The disciples loved Jesus. They wanted to learn from Jesus and grow, but the problem was they were so incredibly immature. Every time Jesus tried to move on to something else one of them would say something stupid. Jesus would say, "Alright, let's go back to square one again. I am the Son of God. I've come to save people from their sins. I'm going to do miracles amongst you. I'm going to seek and save that which was lost. By My own choice, I'm going to be handed over into the hands of sinful men, hang on the cross as an atoning sacrifice and three days later I will rise from the grave" (Matthew 16:21).

As we read the Gospels, we see that He had to do that repeatedly and each time one of the disciples stood up and said, "We're ready to fight for You, Jesus. We have our swords." Look at Peter as an example. What did he do? He said, "Everybody else will fall away from You but I won't" (Matthew 26:35). But Jesus knew what would happen. If I was Jesus, I would have said, "Just be quiet. You don't know what you're talking about."

When I look at the example of Jesus' patience and mercy shown to His disciples, I see how I need to treat my own children and those closest to me. I need to be merciful to them. I need to understand that I once was an ignorant fool—and maybe I still am. People needed to be patient, kind and merciful to me.

Do you see? When we look at Jesus, we see mercy to the desperate, mercy to the detractors and mercy to those who were closest to Him. We see a picture of Jesus modeling mercy and patience in all facets of life. We need to emulate that.

The early church leader John Chrysostom stated it this way, "The merciful Christian imitates God and disappoints the devil." That's what Jesus did. He emulated His Father and disappointed the devil because He showed mercy.

3. In What Ways Is Mercy Mandated for All Christians?

Now that we've looked at the meaning of mercy and the idea of modeling mercy, let's ask the question, "Where is it mandated?" Where does the Bible say we have to show mercy?

First, we need to recognize that we must show mercy if we're going to be like Jesus as the Christian life mandates. In Luke's rendering of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "Be merciful, even as your Father is

merciful" ([Luke 6:36](#)). God is calling us to something. He's mandating that we need to show mercy. As we look at the Scriptures, we repeatedly see God calling us to an active life of mercy, not just a one-time act of mercy.

Some of you might draw on your knowledge of Scripture and say, "Tim, the Bible has lists of spiritual gifts and one of them is to do acts of mercy. I don't have that gift; therefore this sermon is for those who do and not for me." No. It means there are people who have a supernatural spiritual gift that enables them to do exceedingly more acts of mercy than us, but we're all called to show mercy.

Then others of you might say, "My personality is not given to mercy. There are merciful people and then people like me. God has given me the ability to speak the black-and-white truth. I am more gifted at telling people what they need to hear. That's my job. The world needs both kinds of people." Do you know what? That's not your job; that's God's job. God says, "I want you to show mercy."

Regardless of your spiritual gifts or personality, God is calling you to emulate Him by showing mercy.

Christians Are Called to Delight in Being Merciful

There are a couple of things the Bible says about our mercy. The first is that we are to delight in being merciful. This seems so backwards. When was the last time you told somebody about a bad experience you had in the workplace, in the grocery store or with some rude individual? You come home and want to tell everybody, "Listen up; this is what happened. This person was rude to me. This coworker didn't do what they're supposed to do. My boss really laid into me and I let him have it." That's what we want to do, right? We want to say, "Boy that person will never walk over me again. They learned not to cross me!"

But that's not what Jesus says. When that happens, Jesus says our response to people should be to forgive them, pray for them and show mercy. That doesn't make for a good story at the end of your day, does it? Your friends aren't going to be impressed by that. They're going to say, "You did what? You prayed for them?" That doesn't sell; yet that's what God is calling us to do.

[Micah 6:8](#) says we are to love mercy. To love mercy means to do so cheerfully. Micah doesn't say just to do mercy; that's what some of us want. "I'll do it because God wants me to be merciful, but I really don't love it." Micah says we're to take delight in it; to find great pleasure in forgiving others. Do you do that? Do you delight in forgiving others? In helping the poor? In cheering up the sick? In teaching the ignorant? In winning back sinners to the ways of God? Do you long to show mercy? Do you delight in it?

Christians Are Called to Dress Ourselves with Mercy

Did you know that Christians are called to wear uniforms? When you go into Best Buy, you see all their employees wearing blue shirts. When you go into Target, all of the employees are wearing red shirts. This is to set them apart from the shoppers. That uniform says, "I'm here to help you and serve you in your shopping experience."

Like that, we are told in [Colossians 3:12](#) to clothe ourselves in mercy and compassion. Why? It is so the world around us can see our uniform of mercy and ask, "Why in the world are you so merciful? Why didn't you give that rude person a piece of your mind?" Our response back to them is, "Because I have been shown mercy by God Who forgave me."

We are to clothe ourselves with this uniform. Any time the Bible speaks of clothing yourself, it speaks of a daily activity. A great preacher named Ray Stedman shared the tangible idea of clothing ourselves with mercy each day from the moment we wake up. He said:

“When you come to the kitchen table for breakfast come with mercy—mercy for that strange-looking creature who has her hair up in curlers and is shuffling around the kitchen in old slippers and a worn out robe. You need to come with compassion and mercy each morning for that gruff, stubble-faced fellow isolated behind his morning newspaper and ignoring everybody else. You have to clothe yourself daily with mercy and compassion for those children who are trying to get everything together before they go to school.”

God’s people must approach life with mercy and compassion. That is what Paul is saying, “Put mercy and compassion on when you get up in the morning because you are a new man or woman. Therefore, live with mercy.” Do you dress yourself with mercy each morning?

Christians Are Called to Default to Mercy in Difficult Times

You might say, “Tim, you don’t understand. I have had these enemies in my life for so many years. They don’t deserve mercy because of the wrongs they have done to me.” In those circumstances the Bible tells us we are to default to mercy. James 2:13 says that “...mercy triumphs over judgment.”

I love the word “default.” It helps me in our technological age. I am app crazy; if there is an app for something, I want it. I want the world at my fingertips. I want to know what’s going on in the world at the push of a button. Some months ago I had a phone that wasn’t working. The problem was that I had put so many apps on my phone that it was struggling to keep up and do what it was supposed to do. It had been filled with so much baggage that even making a phone call had become difficult.

So I went to the phone store and the man said, “Just so you know, every one of these apps slows down the functionality of the phone. Every once in a while you have to go to the button on the screen that says ‘Default to original settings.’ Sometimes you have too much on the phone and you have to hit that button to clear it all out.”

Some of you are thinking of a person right now who you will never show mercy to and for good reason: they have walked all over you. They have hurt you and cut you deeply. There was a close person in my life like that. Years ago I said, “I will never have a relationship with that person. They lost any chance of that happening.” God had to remind me that He was merciful to me even though I had wronged him repeatedly. God did a work in my heart to press the proverbial default button in my life to clear the screen. I had to realize, “You know what? There is no way this person will ever get over these hurdles for me to show them mercy. I would never have been able to get over my sin issues but Jesus came in and cleared the screen.” He not only cleared the screen but also gave us His righteousness.

Sometimes when mercy is so far out of our grasp, we need to allow all that water under the bridge to go away and say, “I’m going to default to mercy. I’m going to treat them as if they never did those things to me in the first place.” Some of us need to do that in our lives. It will repair our marriages and it will repair our relationships with our children. Does that mean we need to enable bad behavior? No, but it means we don’t respond to it as the person might deserve.

Christians Are Called to Demonstrate Mercy toward Others

Zechariah 7:9 says we're to show mercy and compassion to one another. This is a reminder that mercy cannot just be a thought in our minds. Mercy must be accompanied by actions. It must flow from a merciful heart. A pastor once said that mercy in theory is meaningless. It is! If mercy isn't doing something, then it's not mercy.

Christians Are Called to Do Ministry because of Mercy

Romans 12:1 says that in view of God's mercy to us we need to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Second Corinthians 4:1 says that we have this ministry through God's mercy. That enables us to do something; because God took a step, we need to take a step with one another.

There is some mercy given when we minister to one another. You're receiving some mercy today as I preach to you. How is that? It is because I'm sharing words from God about how we can better our lives. We don't deserve that yet God wants us to have it.

Let's take it to a more practical level. We have dozens of kids on a youth retreat right now. Those youth leaders are serving us in a merciful way—just try staying up all night with teenagers! Try listening to them—especially junior high and high school boys. They smell! They do rude things; they're weird. Those leaders are showing mercy.

When we are merciful, we allow people to receive mercy that they might not even deserve. I was a young person who did not deserve mercy. I attended this church as a young person and there are people here today who showed me mercy when I didn't deserve it.

Our ministry isn't just something we can check off on a piece of paper by saying, "I've done this. I've done that." Ministry is showing mercy to each other. Hosea 6:6 tells us that mercy is greater than sacrifices and burnt offerings.

4. Where Is Mercy to be Manifested Toward Others?

Our understanding of mercy leads to one final question: where is mercy to be manifested? We manifest mercy in two key areas.

Forgiving Others the Debts They Owe You

Mercy is to be manifested by forgiving the debts people owe us. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 18:21-35 which tells a story of forgiveness. This story begins with Peter asking a question.

Then Peter came up and said to Him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of the servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down

and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master what had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from the heart."

There are four principles I want to share with you from this story:

1. You and I owed God a price too great to pay back but He shows mercy.
2. Others' debts pale in comparison to the one that we have been forgiven.
3. Our response to our debtors directly correlates to how God will respond to us.
4. Being unmerciful costs you so much more than showing mercy.

If you're not merciful with the world around you, God says, "I will not be merciful to you." Some of you are enduring hardships right now and asking, "God, why won't You throw me a bone? Why won't You give me a little grace? Why won't You help me out a bit?" If you're not serving and loving people with mercy in your heart, God is holding back His mercy. Some of us are losing out on God's mercy because we're not merciful to others.

We need to find ways to forgive the debts people owe us. Who owes you a debt right now? Who has wronged or offended you? God is telling us through His Word, "Forgive them!" You need to forgive them because you too were forgiven so great a price that you would never be able to pay it back. Out of gratitude for what God has done for you, you need to show mercy to others.

Finding Ways to Help the Downtrodden No Matter the Cost

Let's look at the powerful story of the Good Samaritan where we see mercy amidst racial tension. The way we show mercy to the world we live in involves three things that the Good Samaritan did.

Showing mercy involves recognition. The good Samaritan saw a man in need. There were two other men who saw the same situation but they went on the other side of the road to get away from it. Brothers and sisters, do you walk on the other side of the road when someone needs something? Do you get far enough away so that need doesn't affect what's happening in your life? If so, you have an unmerciful spirit.

The Samaritan saw the need and recognized, "That man's need draws me closer. It means I'm going to have to change my schedule, I'm going to get a little dirty and it may cost me." But why does he do it? We see that the good Samaritan did it because he had pity in his heart for the man who had been beaten down and left for dead.

Do you have pity for those in need in the world? When we see someone in need, we are so quick to judge instead of show mercy. We are quick to say, "I have been able to get through life without any help so why should someone else need help?" It's that whole "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" mentality. It's an American mentality but it's not a Christian one. The Christian mentality says, "Let me help you with your bootstraps because God helped me with mine."

Showing mercy involves action. We need to be motivated by mercy, which then leads us to action. Notice that action wasn't just a quick fly-by action but rather the good Samaritan addressed the man's deepest need—his physical well-being—right away.

1. Mercy involves addressing the need.
2. Mercy involves your own personal resources. Mercy is not giving of someone else's resources; it is us giving of ourselves. The Samaritan took care of the man's need. He was bloodied and naked so the Samaritan took care of it, using the resources from his own pocket.
3. Mercy involves taking care of the long term. The Samaritan didn't just take care of the immediate needs. He also put the man in an inn where he would be taken care of—there was food, water and care for the long term.

Some of us feel good when we throw some money in the Salvation Army bucket at Christmas time. We say, "That's it!" God says mercy is not just throwing coins into a kettle but it is also seeking the long-term care of those in need.

How are you forgiving others of their debts? How are you finding ways to help the downtrodden? When we begin to ask those questions, we will get to the heart of God.

This beatitude is the only one that has the same promise as the condition, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy." With the same measure that you show mercy to others is how God will show mercy to you. So instead of judging others and trying to justify not helping, give unqualified mercy to those who don't deserve it. Give because God has given to you. When we do that, God says we'll be blessed. My prayer is that this will be true for us as a church, that mercy will reign true in our witness to the world. I pray that in our time of need, we will receive mercy because we have shown mercy.

Let's pray.

Father God, we come before You, thanking You for Your Word. I pray that we would take and apply Your Word to our lives with regard to those who have wronged us, with regard to those who are hurting and with regard to those who are closest to us. Empower us by Your Spirit to show mercy. Remind us by Your Spirit of the great sins that alienated us from You. Remind us of the great price of mercy, love and grace that was shown to us. Remind us that we who were dead in our trespasses and sin have been made alive because of Your great mercy for us.

Lord, remind us of these things in the workplace. Remind us of these things when we become impatient with our kids. Remind us of these things when we see that person who is down and out and in need of a helping hand. I know there is discernment needed because sometimes our helping can hurt, so lead us to a discernment filled with mercy and not judgment. Help us to show this world Who You are and what You are all about. Thank You for Your mercy and Your grace. We love You and praise You. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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