

Matthew 5:7
It Takes Knowing ONE to Be One
Lesson on Mercy

I read something yesterday that really fits for us. It was a beginning of an article on one of the magazines I read.

The author, Jamie Dean says this. Advent Season this year approaches with a world already waiting. Waiting for a vaccine, waiting for life after COVID, waiting for a president to be fully named and waiting see how everything unfolds.

I did the funeral Friday for Janice Egan and the verse they picked was one of Janice's favorites. **Psalm 46:10a, "Be still and know I am God."**

I thought how well this fit with our waiting. In the scriptures God tells us to wait on Him. He repeats it often because He knows for us, waiting is especially difficult. Waiting though, is inevitable. But how we wait – with calm and composure, matters to God.

This is again, why I am so pleased God has brought us to the teachings of Jesus as found in Matthew 5. I believe as we take these teachings to heart and begin to live in them, not only will we be blessed and protected, but we also can be a blessing to others and actually protect them in the midst of the world chaos we find ourselves in.

As Jesus begins His earthly ministry, He goes up on the side of a mountain and in a miraculous way He begins to preach to His disciples and all those who have been following.

I have thought many times about how Jesus preached to the masses. There was no sound equipment. No acoustical pleasing auditorium for Him to preach in. All He had was mountain sides and the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have no doubt that Jesus was led to a place like Red Rocks here in Colorado or some other place where the sound of His voice carried into the crowds of thousands and thousands. Such was the setting of Jesus' first recorded sermon, the Sermon on the Mount.

This morning we find ourselves examining the flow of Jesus' thought when He says in verse 7... **Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."**

To capture the flow of thought here, remember last week when we saw how the first three beatitudes described the emptiness of the blessed person.

A blessed person is...

Vs. 3 Poverty stricken in spirit. They know they are lacking

Vs. 4 Grieving over their sin and condition and the sin and condition of the world

Vs. 5 They are meek and open to teachings from Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit

This condition creates a hunger and thirst for righteousness, right living according to God.

This person hungers and thirsts for truth and the fullness of life it brings. And when they come to this place, Jesus tells us they will be satisfied meaning, Jesus Himself will fill them up with what they are asking for which is the presence and power of His righteousness.

We will talk more about that in a moment but first, let me share a parable with you that Jesus uses to teach on mercy. Look with me at Matthew 18. Jesus has just completed a teaching on some of the things a disciple of His should or should not do and Peter, being the outspoken one, asks the following.

Matthew 18:21, “Then Peter came and said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

Seems like Peter might have been trying to limit the amount of times he was to forgive someone but Jesus, as Jesus usually does, He takes even forgiveness to the next level. Look at His reply.

Matthew 18:22, “Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

Certainly we know Jesus is not saying we should forgive up to 490 times but He is pretty much saying infinity. There is no end to the amount of forgiveness we should extend. And then Jesus shares the following parable, teaching on how a disciple in the Kingdom of God should be operating.

Let's read this parable in its entirety.

Matthew 18:23-35, “23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 And when he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his master commanded that he be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment be made. 26 So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ 27 And the master of that slave felt compassion, and he released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe!’ 29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ 30 But he was unwilling, and went and threw him in prison until he would pay back what was owed.

31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their master all that had happened. 32 Then summoning him, his master *said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ 34 And his master, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he would repay all that was owed him. 35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

From this parable we can easily see how wrong the first slave was in his actions and attitude.

Why do you think this slave, forgiven what might have been millions of dollars, was so harsh on the slave who owed him perhaps hundreds? Might it have been that he didn’t appreciate how much he had truly been forgiven? He certainly knew the tremendous amount of debt that he owed but how was it that he didn’t fully appreciate it. Appreciate it enough that it would affect the depths of his heart and change him to the point where he would become a merciful person himself.

I think this is the lesson for us today. How do we become a merciful person and begin to live in that blessed place Jesus talks about in His teaching? Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.

I think it begins with

1. How do we become a merciful person?

a. Appreciating, remembering and constantly dwelling on the mercies we have received

But before we go there, let’s examine the consequences of the person in Jesus’ parable who did not operate in mercy.

Look back with me at the end of this parable where Jesus pronounces a sentence to the one lacking in mercy towards others. I have it underlined in your outline.

Verse 34-35, “And his master, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he would repay all that was owed him. 35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Pretty clear words from Jesus. In the days of Jesus there was something called debtors prison. If you found yourself for some reason unable to pay your debts, the person you owed funds to could demand you be put in debtor’s prison until your debt was paid.

It would be easier to say that debtors prison was really a work camp, but not a very nice work camp. If you were placed there you would not only live there but you were forced to work and your wages went towards paying your room and board and the debt you were trying to pay off.

You can imagine how difficult this would be to do. Depending upon the amount of debt it could take years if not a lifetime and even then you may not have all your debt payed off.

In this parable of Jesus, the first slave was generous, and through his through mercy, released the slave from a debt that was unpayable. No way could the slave have put in enough time in debtor’s prison to pay off his debt. It was impossible. So a tremendous amount was forgiven. That is what made how he treated his fellow slave so grievous and why His master was moved with anger and handed him over to the torturers until his debt was paid.

Jesus follows up by saying this is what My Father God will do to each of you if you don’t forgive his brother from your heart. Strong words.

But here is what I believe Jesus is saying.

Some of you know part of Michal's story. She was raised in a very tough environment in a dysfunctional family which left all the kids with issues. Michal is really the only one of the four children who, with the Lord's help, was able to grow and mature into a God-like person. Not that she is perfect but she, like most Christians should be with God's help, is on the journey.

But her family has not embraced the Lord on the same level as Michal. They say they believe in God and even love God but their lives don't really show it. They are offended at every little thing and over time these offenses have created a debtors prison of sorts that they are stuck in.

Their hearts have become full of bitterness and their ability to love others and even the ability to receive love from God and therefore love others is just not there. The torture they receive is really from their own making.

This is what I believe Jesus says God will allow to happen if people do not have forgiveness, mercy working in their lives.

2. Consequences of not operating in mercy: People will get locked into prison of their own making and it will be place of self inflicted torture.

Let me say to you this morning this is the big crisis I believe we find ourselves in today if we are not careful. Never before in my life time have I seen so many opportunities for us to be forgiving. Over and over again we are presented with not only world, national and local news that is disturbing. Watching as politicians and people of all different kinds act out their anger. But we also have many opportunities to forgive right in our backyard.

This is a very stressful time for most. The changes that have been thrust upon us are tremendous. Our lives are at the mercy, and let me say this clearly, at the mercy of our God. He does know what is going on here on earth, He knows the timing of the end of COVID or how we are going to live with it from now on. He knows what is happening politically.

Nothing, nothing gets past our God. He either causes it or He allows it. In each and every case He is working in the events of the world and our lives to bring along His great kingdom plan.

But not everyone understands this and is able to function properly in this place of surrender with our God. And because of this they will be short with us, negative about world issues, political issues, all kinds of issues. They are functioning out of their own prison and they are not even aware of it.

Not us though. We have a great relationship with our God through His Son Jesus so we can function in peace, forgiveness and mercy even in the toughest of relationships and environments. How? Appreciating, remembering and constantly dwelling on the mercies we have received.

Look with me at what Zacharia, the father of John the Baptist was moved by the Holy Spirit to say concerning the birth of the Savior.

Luke, 1: 77-78a, “(God gave) His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God...”

The people of the world including you and me, had a debt we could not pay. We could fill our lives in debtor’s prison but it wouldn’t be enough. Our lives could be spent doing good works, helping the poor and needy, feeding the starving and many other compassionate things but it wouldn’t be enough.

Those things are good in their own way but they do not take care of the debt of our sins. They do not remove the state of our sin. It is too big of a debt.

God had a choice. He could have demanded that we pay our debt in hell. Be handed over to the torturers until the debt be paid with our lives. But He couldn't. His love for us was too strong. His desire for us to spend eternity with Him was too overwhelming. So He sent payment. His Son.

If someone was unfortunate enough to have been cast into debtors prison they could have a benefactor come along. Someone who saw the tragedy of being in debtors prison, someone who was moved with compassion and decided, in a great act of mercy, to pay the debt for the person.

That is what God did through His Son Jesus. He was moved with compassion, mercy and He paid our debt. His choice was not debtors prison for us, it was freedom with Him.

We have been blessed. We have not only one benefactor who paid our debt, we have two. Yes we have God but we also have Jesus. He has the same love for you, the same desire to rescue you from debtors prison, the same desire for you to live in freedom with Him and His Father.

You are blessed. I hope you will dwell upon just how blessed you are and through this become a blessing to others.

As disciples of Christ you now have been given the power to make a choice. You can send people into debtors prison and in turn, place yourself there. Or you can look at what God did for you, ponder it, thank Him for it and ask for His power to extend mercy to those in your life who may not even deserve it. It is what God did for you.

As you do, something wonderful occurs.

Matthew 5:7, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

3. Operating in the power of mercy unlocks more heavenly blessings. In many ways, even more of God’s mercies will be poured out onto you

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive even more mercy.

As we follow the teachings of Jesus the blessings of our God are never ending. They are new every morning.

Lets pray.