

Last week we discussed William Barclay (1907-1978), a Scottish author who says we are to long for righteousness like a starving man longs for food and water. **Matthew 5:6** – Jesus said: **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”** God promises to fill you if you will yearn for righteousness. Have you thought of this this week?

Matthew 5:7 – Jesus said: **“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”**

Charles E. Moore (1956 -) Writer, teacher, and pastor in the Bruderhof Community. The Bruderhof (German for “place of brothers”) was founded in 1920 by a group of young people seeking answers to the widespread devastation and chaos of post-war German society. Inspired by the example of the first Christians in Jerusalem, they started a community. They currently have communities all over the world.

Moore says during the Roman empire slaves were exploited and unwanted children could be thrown out to die in the streets. In modern times we need only to look at Stalin’s purges, Hitler’s atrocities, or genocide in Rwanda to see the cruelty of mankind where life is not cherished and evil rules. Why do you think these things have occurred in history?

What is occurring today in our world that can be construed as cruel and merciless?

“But even our everyday world can be harsh.our lives are riddled with judgement, suspicion, and blame.”

What are some examples in our modern society where cruelty and judgement is prevalent?

Merciful - The main words for "merciful" in the Bible are **eleemon** (Greek) and **rachum** (Hebrew). *Eleemon* means "to have pity on" or "be merciful," while *rachum* is linked to a deep, tender love and compassion, often connected to the Hebrew word for "womb". Other related Hebrew words include *rachamim* (compassion) and *chesed* (loving-kindness), and the New Testament uses related Greek words like *eleos* (mercy/compassion) and *oiktirmos* (pity/compassion). What does being “merciful” mean to you?

DT 4:31 – “the Lord your God is a merciful God.”

Ne 9:31 – “for you are a gracious and merciful God.”

Jer. 3:12 – “for I am merciful declares the Lord.”

Luke 6:36 – “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

James 2:13 – “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgement without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgement!” What is James telling us as believers?

Moore says: “Showing mercy is one thing, being merciful another. Being merciful is not just doing kind deeds. Mercy assumes a certain posture.” “They welcome the prodigal son home despite his sin and despite the wreckage he has caused others. For they too have been welcomed.” Have you ever considered that because our Father is merciful and we are made in the image of our Father, that we should be merciful as He is? Do you have examples in your life that you were merciful or should have been?

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) – Russian novelist, pacifist, and reformer. He is regarded as one of the greatest and most influential authors of all time. Born to an aristocratic family, Tolstoy achieved acclaim in his twenties with his semi-autobiographical trilogy, *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth* (1852–1856), and with *Sevastopol Sketches* (1855), based on his experiences in the Crimean War. His *War and Peace* (1869), *Anna Karenina* (1878), and *Resurrection* (1899), which is based on his "youthful sins," are often cited as pinnacles of realist fiction and three of the greatest novels ever written.

“Loving activity gains its importance from the fact that it is contagious.” “...if one sees how another is sharing with a neighbor, is working for an unfortunate, one has the desire to do likewise. In this lies the strength of loving activity.” Have you ever thought of the good activity you perform as being contagious? Like the lighting of one candle to another, mercy spreads.

“As one candle kindles another, and thousands are lighted from that one, so also one heart inflames another and thousands are set a-glowing. Millions of rubles will do less than will be done by even a small diminution of greediness and increase of love in the mass of the people. If only the love is multiplied then the miracle is accomplished which was performed at the distribution of the five loaves. All are satisfied, and still much remains.”

What is Tolstoy telling us about mercy and love? What is the correlation between that and the five loaves?

1 Cor. 13:13 – Paul wrote: “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Why is the greatest of these love?

1 John 4:8 – John wrote: “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

Because God is love and has communicated his love to us and commands us to love one another, love supersedes the gifts. It outlasts them all. Long after these sought-after gifts are no longer necessary, love will still be the governing principle that controls all that God and his redeemed people are and do. Go and love and show mercy as God does.