

Day 22

Mercy Givers!

Matthew 5:7 (NIV) Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

The power of the words that Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount are so penetrating and heart-piercing that it will sober anyone to the reality of a blessed life God's way. Anyone who is willing to allow these words within the chambers of their soul will find the blessed life Jesus offers. These words are Spirit and they are life. These words are food for the hungry and water for the thirsty. These words carry the way of the Kingdom and point to the deeper life. These words are a fountain of blessing and a river of grace. These words are not for the faint or the feign, but for the faithful. These words are for those who desire to build their lives on a firm foundation that will never be shaken; those who long to build God's way and not the way of the current culture.

Jesus said spiritual poverty leads to the right kind of mourning that brings me to my knees in meekness. Meekness leads me to develop a hunger and thirst to do things God's way, not my own.

Then Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful..." If you remember from our study on meekness, we said that meekness is the most identifiable character trait whereby we show that we are followers of Jesus!

Mercy, on the other hand, shows that we understand our own weaknesses and the depth of our Heavenly Father's love toward us.

Mercy givers will be mercy receivers, according to Jesus. Mercy is what we get when we give mercy. Mercy is a gift we give others because it is a gift we have received and will receive. We received undeserved mercy, so Jesus says we must give mercy in the same way we received it. Mercy is never given because it is deserved. Mercy is always given because it is needed, not just for the one on the receiving end, but also for the one on the giving end. The only One who has never needed mercy or will ever need mercy is God. So God, our Father, does not need mercy, Jesus does not need mercy, yet He freely gives mercy to those who do not deserve it. ***"But when God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, 5 he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:4-5 NLT)***

Jesus tells us that the merciful will be blessed by receiving mercy. He gives us what we do not deserve (mercy), so we can give the same to others. What do we deserve? What wages have we earned? ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23 NLT)*** If we were to get what we earned, we'd get death. We all have sinned. There is not a single person who has ever been born, with the exception of Jesus, that is sinless. We deserve judgment. God's perfect justice would be to punish us for what we have done. So Jesus steps in, and satisfies God's perfect justice on the cross, and then offers mercy to the undeserving...us. So Christ gets what He does not deserve, so that we can avoid what we do deserve. That's called mercy! Thank God for His mercy! We can echo what the Psalmist wrote: ***"He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. 10 He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. 11 For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth." Psalm 103:9-11(NLT)***

So, now that we have been the recipients of God's mercy, He demands that we give mercy in the same measure that He gave mercy to us. If you think I am being harsh when I say, "God demands us to be merciful and show mercy," then see what James writes: ***"You will be judged on whether or not you are doing what Christ wants you to. So watch what you do and what you think; 13 for there will be no***

mercy to those who have shown no mercy. But if you have been merciful, then God's mercy toward you will win out over his judgment against you." James 2:12-13 (TLB)

So James says that the way we are all going to be judged is by Jesus as the measure; your life and my life being compared to Christ, and in the measure that we have obeyed Christ. So Jesus says, "be merciful," and then He demonstrates mercy throughout His life and ministry. He heals. He forgives. He does not cast the first stone, although He could. He goes to the sinner and the religious. He shows kindness, mercy and forgiveness. He washes the feet of His betrayer. He heals the ear of His attacker. He gives mercy to a dying criminal on the cross. He prays this prayer for His enemies, who placed Him on the cross, while they gamble right in front of Him for His clothes: ***"Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice."*** (Luke 23:34 NLT)

So, that is the measure that we must be givers of mercy. I can hear the mental retort, "But wait, that's hard!" Jesus says, "It's hard, but necessary." Mercy givers understand their own need for mercy. They work for just outcomes, but they show mercy everywhere they go, because mercy triumphs over judgement. Mercy givers realize that without mercy to others, they themselves will have to be perfectly just, and no one is, so we need mercy. So we give mercy because we understand our own need for mercy. Mercy givers see themselves soberly. They see others the same way, and recognize that both them, and others, need mercy.

What kind of mercy giver are you? Do you give mercy only to those who you deem as worthy? I don't know where you are in your spiritual journey, but I want to encourage you to look at God's mercy towards you and then become a dispenser of God's mercy to others. I want to be a mercy giver because Jesus, the greatest Giver of mercy, gave me what I did not deserve, so that I can give to others what they don't deserve. We all need lots of mercy, so there should never be a day where we run out of mercy for others. Mercy given, mercy received...

Reflection and Prayer:

- Take a moment and thank the Lord for His mercy towards you.
- Everything in our lives should be measured and compared to Jesus. If Jesus did it, we should do it. If Jesus commands it, we should obey it. If Jesus demonstrated it, we should learn from it and put it into practice. Read these sobering words from James: ***"You will be judged on whether or not you are doing what Christ wants you to. So watch what you do and what you think; 13 for there will be no mercy to those who have shown no mercy. But if you have been merciful, then God's mercy toward you will win out over his judgment against you."*** James 2:12-13 (TLB) Now simply ask yourself: "Do I want judgment or mercy?"
- What will the judgment look like for you if you continue showing people the same level of mercy you do now?
- What can we do to multiply mercy towards others?