

Day 27
Mercy Forgives...

Matthew 5:7(MSG) *"You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for."*

The building block of mercy is powerful and challenging at the same time. These attributes and characteristics, that Jesus says we need to have, confront us at the very root of living life. These are not pie in the sky, close your eyes and hope for the best, qualities. **They are very practical, but they can only be supernaturally activated by the Holy Spirit once we have recognized our own need for God.** Humility, hunger and thirst for righteousness, and mercy must always be present and functioning in the life of those who profess to love God. Pull one of these out and the whole building collapses like a cheap deck of cards. We are not merciful when it is convenient or when we are in the spotlight. **Mercy requires self-sacrificial actions that allows us to demonstrate God's love in the face of great personal loss.** Plainly put, mercy forgives.

The metal of mercy is tested in the fire of difficult relationships. But it is also tested every day relating to those we say we love. We all can mentally assent to the idea of forgiveness. We all agree that forgiveness is a good thing, yet many of us struggle to forgive. It seems like forgiveness is easy to encourage when someone else has been wronged, but when we personally have suffered wrong, it is much more challenging. **Forgiveness is needed for relationships to reach their full potential. We are all in need of forgiveness and we all need to forgive.** The alternative is nothing but a prison of resentment, bitterness and perpetual rehearsals of wrongs suffered. **No one survives this life unscathed, especially when it is lived in proximity to other human beings.**

I have lived long enough to know that the following statement carries a great deal of truth: ***"Hurting people hurt people and are easily hurt by people."*** People with a great deal of unresolved hurts, have the capacity and propensity to pass that hurt on to others; sometimes unwittingly, and sometimes deliberately; nevertheless, people get hurt. Those same hurting people are also easily offended by others, not just by people's actions, but by what they might perceive as some kind of wrong intention. Jesus obviously knows the depth of peoples hurts and their capacity for hurting others. Yet, He is very clear on how we, as Christ followers, should respond. Peter had these mercy and forgiveness concepts on his mind, so he asked Jesus about it.

"Then Peter came to him and asked, 'Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?' 22 'No, not seven times,' Jesus replied, 'but seventy times seven!'" (Matthew 18:21-22 NLT) Peter is very specific in his question about forgiveness to Jesus. We know that the Pharisees claimed that it was necessary to forgive three times. So Peter must have thought: "If I double the amount of times that the Pharisees say to forgive and add one for a bonus, then, surely, Jesus is going to be very proud of my level of mercy." But Jesus blew that theory right out of Peter's mind. Jesus said, "Seventy times seven"! Is this about math? No! **Jesus wanted them to understand that forgiveness is not a math equation; it is a heart condition.** So, Jesus tells another story.

"Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. 24 In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. 25 He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. 26 But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' 27 Then his

master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. 28 But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. 29 His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. 30 But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. 31 When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. 32 Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. 35 That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.' (Matthew 18:21-35 NLT)

Jesus always speaks from God's Kingdom point of view. To hear Jesus speak, to see Jesus work, to observe Jesus' life and ministry, is to know how the Kingdom of God operates. **When you see Jesus, you see God's Kingdom.** There is nothing ambiguous about this story. Jesus is very very clear. We are all that first servant who owes God an incredible debt. Our debt is sin and it has earned us eternal damnation. That is what we have earned. So we ask for mercy, because we know our own spiritual poverty. We know we will never be able to repay this debt. **God is full of mercy and He releases us not only from the burden of our debt, but also the consequences.** We, just like the first servant in this story, get to go free. Our sins are forgiven and our freedom is guaranteed. So, what are we to do with this freedom?

We have one of two choices: **First, we could, out of gratitude for what we have received, pass on this gift of mercy and freedom to those who have wronged us and owe us a debt.** We have been wronged, lied about, betrayed, cheated, hurt, used and even abused because of what others have done against us. They owe us, but we have chosen to not hold their debt against them; so we give them mercy. We give them mercy, because when we look at the measure that we have received mercy, mercy is the only wise response! **The second choice we have is to demand justice instead. They wronged us and they need to bear the consequences of their actions against us.** So, we will hold them accountable until we feel that they have apologized enough, groveled enough, or suffered in the same measure that we have suffered due to what they have done against us!

The only problem with the second approach is that, to receive forgiveness from our King, He demands that we give forgiveness to others. *"Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. 35 'That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.'"* (Matthew 18:32-35 NLT)

In the Kingdom of God, forgiveness can only be received by us if we are willing to give it as well; not a superficial platitude or token, but a real, raw, selfless act, that is coming from the depth of our hearts. Mercy is not for the shallow minded, but for those who know they themselves have a desperate need to be forgiven. Out of that grateful heart for what we received, we give it to others, God's undeserved mercy and forgiveness. We do not do it reluctantly; we do it quickly. **"Be quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you."** (Colossians 3:13 MSG)

That enables us to pray for forgiveness because we receive what we are willing to give. **"And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us."** (Matthew 6:12 NLT) Forgiving people understand their own propensity for wrong, and, therefore, their need for forgiveness. **Kingdom people**

understand that mercy is not optional. Mercy has been received by us, therefore, it must be given by us. If we are unwilling to forgive, Jesus made this crystal clear, we will not be forgiven! Mercy is the greatest boomerang beatitude; we give it, it will return. We refuse to give it, it cannot return. The return comes from our Father; the more mercy we give others, the more mercy He gives us. ***“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6:14-15 NLT)***

We need to forgive others because we need to be forgiven by our Father in Heaven. We struggle to forgive because we don’t understand forgiveness. Forgiveness is not trust. Trust is built with consistent behavior over time. Forgiving is not forgetting. I don’t believe that God forgets our sin; He just chooses not to remember our sin. He does not suffer from “Divine Amnesia.” **Our Heavenly Father has a forgiving heart. When He forgives me, He treats me as if I had never done the wrong.** He treats me as if I had never sinned. That is mercy and forgiveness. God knows exactly what I have done. He knows every dirty, unholy detail, yet He treats me as if I had not done it. So, we as His children choose to do the same. **Forgiveness is making a decision not to allow what others have done to hinder my spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health, and not to place them or myself in an emotional prison.**

When people make mistakes, do you hold it over their heads, or do you forgive? If someone hurts you, do you remember it every time you see the person and hold a grudge or become bitter against them? Or do you treat the person as if it has never happened?

Who owes you? Who hurt you? Who angered you? Who caused pain in your life? Will you give them what you received, so that we all can walk in our Father’s Freedom? The choice is yours...

Reflection and Prayer:

- How grateful are you that you have received God’s mercy? **Take a moment and thank Him for His forgiveness towards you.**
- Who do you need to forgive? **Be still before the Lord and be vulnerable and transparent.** (He already knows)
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you God’s heart of mercy for that individual or individuals. **Pray a sincere prayer from your heart** (This might not be easy for you, but let Jesus’ mercy empower you to pray) : ***“Father, I choose to forgive_____! I thank You that You forgive me as I forgive others. I release my faith in Your mercy and ask for the grace to not become bitter or retaliatory. I know that they have wronged me, but I am not seeking vengeance, I ask for mercy for them. I freely forgive them as You freely forgave me. Thank You that I can walk in Your freedom! In Jesus’ Name Amen.”***
- Trust that God will continue to give you the strength and the power to continue to walk in this freedom. **The door is open; walk in your freedom!**