

“Nuggets” For Today
(Study Notes on Pastor’s Sermon for today)

SERIES: “BLESSED: A REFLECTION ON THE BEATITUDES”

Sermon 5: “BLESSED are the Merciful”

TEXT: MATTHEW 5:1-10

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The Oxford dictionary defines “mercy” as:

“Compassion shown towards someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm.”

In other words, one has the power to wreak vengeance on another who may even deserve it, but one chooses not to. That’s the *passive* part of mercy.

Of course the *active* part is actually doing something to help a person or persons in need.

Well Jesus in our text this morning says: ***“Blessed are the merciful”***

What does being merciful look like in action? Well, I am sure we know of many aid agencies, charitable organisations that reach out in mercy and offer hope to those in dire straits.

Let’s pause for a few minutes this morning and consider a familiar parable that Jesus told, which demonstrates some very clear principles of mercy – ***the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37). Read the parable slowly.*** What do we learn about mercy from this parable?

Well, firstly,

I. Mercy Flows From The Top Down

Mercy always comes down. What do we mean by that? Well, in any situation where mercy is shown, there are at least two parties. The one who is *showing mercy*, and the one who is *receiving* it.

It is not a two way transaction. There is no bargaining or dealing taking place. Because the one who is on the receiving end of mercy has nothing to offer. He/she has nothing to bring to the table. (Remember, when we spoke about *being poor in spirit?*)

It all depends on the one showing the mercy. The power rests in his/her hands; he/she has the capacity; they have what the other person needs, and it’s their call whether or not to use what they have been blessed with to help the recipient.

In the story of the Good Samaritan, *the priest* was in a position to help the man – but he decided not to, and passed on the other side of the road (v31); The *Levite* too was in a position to show mercy, but he chose not to, and passed by on the other side. *The Samaritan* however sees the man, has pity on him, and from that which he has been blessed with, he becomes a conduit/channel of mercy to meet his need.

The man in the dust had nothing to offer. He was broken; bruised, beaten and bleeding. Death was the inevitable outcome, unless someone stepped in, and was merciful to him. That somebody was the Samaritan.

Now, we need to pause there for a second this morning, because if we say that mercy flows from the top down – **what is involved when a helping hand is offered? What would that Samaritan, who was up here physically, have to do to get to the dying man down there?** He would have to bend down. He would have to *stoop down* to that man's level, isn't that so. And right there, dear friends, we have the biblical definition of mercy. ***“Stooping down in kindness”.*** *Getting down to the level of someone who is hurting, and meeting them where they are at in their despair.*

Friends, what a picture here of God's action in our lives. We, too were left bleeding and dying on the road of life – messed up by sin; left for dead, unable to help ourselves. We were in desperate need for someone to step in and rescue us. Because if nobody did, if nobody displayed mercy towards us, the only possible outcome would be death! Eternal death! However, praise God! The Father would not leave us in our wretched state, so He intervenes by sending the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! **READ Galatians 4**

What else do we learn about mercy from this story?

II. Mercy Picks Others Up

³³ *But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.* ³⁴ *He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.*

Q. Where was the man lying? A. In the dust/dirt.

The Samaritan puts the man on his donkey. In other words, he picks the man up. That's what mercy does dear friends. It takes someone from the dust and the dirt of their circumstances, and places them in a position of restoration.

We live in a world that wants to see returns on its investment. In other words, if there's nothing in it for me; if there's no benefit to myself or my family, I'm not going to worry getting my hands dirty. Sadly, that has crept into the church as well. Very often the church can be seen and run as a business rather than a place

of healing and restoration. Very often it's viewed along the lines of a social club, where paying members should have exclusive privileges, rather than a place where the outcasts, the sinners, those outside of the mould of our thinking are welcomed and lifted up.

You see, *mercy doesn't mind seeing others get ahead in life*. Mercy doesn't mind helping another into their place of wholeness, even if it means minimal or no return on the "investment", even if it means we won't see the reward this side of heaven.

I don't know about you, dear friend, but I am glad, O so glad, that Jesus didn't expect a return when he invested his life. When he laid down His life willingly on a cruel cross; that He didn't wait until we were more "deserving" of His sacrifice. (**READ Romans 5:8**). Mercy picks others up!

Another principle about mercy we learn in this parable this morning, is that

III. Mercy Costs Something

READ Luke 10:35

We cannot read this parable without pausing and considering the cost to this Samaritan.

- i. **It cost him his safety.** By stopping to help on what was clearly a dangerous stretch of road, he placed his own life in danger. It cost him something at that point.
- ii. **It cost him his pride.** Why do we say that? It could well have been assumed that the victim in this story was a Jew. And as we know, friends, there was extremely bitter feelings between the Jews and the Samaritans. Jews regarded Samaritans as nothing more than half-breed dogs, and they treated them accordingly. So, from a human point of view we may well have understood if this Samaritan had just walked on by like the other two Jews had done before. After all, the chances were that this man that he was stopping to help, would never have done this for him, if the tables were turned. But you see, mercy comes at a price, and this Samaritan was willing to pocket his pride; he was willing to set aside whatever negative emotions may have arisen, and help a fellow human being in his time of need, irrespective of his background. *Mercy costs something*.
- iii. **Then of course there's the financial cost here.** He pays 2 denarii – which would be equivalent to two full days' wages, with the assurance of his willingness to pay any extras should it be necessary.

From time to time we all have had the opportunity to experience the cost of mercy, to some degree or another. Whether it's through appeals that go out at times of disaster, or other opportunities that we have to give of our resources, whether financially or in other ways. Of course that's a limited experience, because very often one gives out of one's abundance, isn't that so? We empty our pockets of the pocket change, because it's getting to heavy. And while every cent makes a difference, that's not quite the cost we are speaking of here.

It was mother Theresa I think, who defined love as “**giving till it hurts**”! And that’s what the Samaritan in this story did. He gave sacrificially.

Well, friends, we certainly don’t have to look too far to see the price of mercy as it plays out in the life of Christ.

- i. ***It cost him emotionally***, as he prayed in anguish in the garden, so much so that he sweated drops of blood.
- ii. ***It cost Him His dignity***, as He was stripped, whipped, spat upon and nailed to an old rugged cross, the place of suffering and shame.
- iii. And of course it cost him the ultimate price of all – ***his own life***:
READ 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Mercy extended to an undeserving world, comes at a cost the Father; it comes at a cost to the Son.

IV. Mercy Involves Action

After telling the parable Jesus says to those listening - “**Go and do likewise.**” (v37) Go and be merciful to others.

Where do we start? What opportunities are there to show mercy; to hold back on retaliating when someone hurts us; or to stoop down in kindness to help others?

Well, where does the opportunity for mercy show up for each of the men in this passage?

- a) For the priest: he “***happened to be going down the same road***” (v31)
- b) The Levite “***he came to the place***” (v32)
- c) The Samaritan: “***as he travelled***”

Each of these men set out that day as they would on any other occasion; and there on the road of life, *just going about their everyday routine* – the opportunity for mercy, just happened to rear its head. Of course only the Samaritan took hold of the opportunity.

This week, as you travel along the road of life, dear friend, I wonder what opportunities will present themselves for you to show mercy. God may bring people across your path who are hurting; who are lonely; who are left for dead by the circumstances they are going through.

Remember, mercy flows from the top down – you’ve been shown mercy by a God who’s mercy endures forever. **Will you be the channel; will you be the conduit through which His mercy and love flows down to pick somebody up.**

Amen

God bless as you walk with Jesus this week.

Pastor Wayne

