

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

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Merciful Father, we stand in awe of your magnificence and your glory. [UNCLEAR]...description and to guide us into all truth, and may it be so that we might leave this day with a clearer vision of who you are in all of your majesty and your glory, that we might live a life of awe before you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[UNCLEAR]...you have a handout that was given to you this morning, I think, a series of little tidbits...Bishop Rogers was kind enough to...[UNCLEAR]... I think it's about number 6 down on the left-hand side. It's the one that says, "Justification is freedom from the presence of sin." Now that is not correct. Justification is freedom from the penalty of sin, not the presence. Now the way that this works is...[UNCLEAR]...pilgrimage of the Christian's life. You have justification, sanctification, glorification.

Justification is freedom from the penalty of sin, sanctification is freedom from the power of sin, and glorification is freedom from the presence of sin. So the one that you have there, either change the word justification to glorification, or change the word presence to penalty. It goes from left to right, if you would—justification, freedom from the penalty of sin; sanctification, freedom from the power of sin; and glorification, freedom from the presence of sin.

*Gale: We have several papers here. Which paper are we looking at?*

Well I would say the one that has all the verbiage on it. This one...[UNCLEAR]...say something like that...up at the very...it's about number 6 down on the left-hand side on the front page.

*Audience Member: Could you repeat?*

Sure. Justification...[UNCLEAR]...the pilgrimage of the Christian's life is essentially these three words. First of all, there's justification, which is freedom from the penalty of sin. God declares you righteous, gives you the righteousness of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. You get credit for his sinless perfection and perfect obedience, therefore, God views you differently. He looks at you differently and sees you now wrapped in the blood of Christ, in the robes of righteousness. Therefore, you are free from the penalty of your sin. That's how he deals with the penalty. God's law is satisfied in the sacrifice of Christ. You are declared righteous, and you accept that justification by faith alone.

Then you go to sanctification. That is being set apart for service. The word sanctify means to be set apart. Because you have been justified, you have now been set apart to live a holy life. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the one...[UNCLEAR]...ahead of us and is our power source, is our paraclete, the one who is our counselor, and he is the one who comes along and walks beside us so that we are now...sanctification is freedom from the power of sin. You don't have to live like you used to anymore. You don't have to do that because of the power...[UNCLEAR]...

Thirdly is glorification. That is freedom from the presence of sin. That will be the first time that you and I will be free from the presence of sin. That is glorification. That is why, in the Christian faith...[UNCLEAR]...in the body at the death of a believer, because we are now free from the presence of sin.

Robert E. Lee said a great statement just before the battle of Gettysburg when he said, "We should not expect our troops to be free from the presence of evil, just not to be contaminated by it." That's a good

expression. We should not be expect...[UNCLEAR]...to be free from presence of evil; we just want to make sure they're not contaminated by it. That's part of our responsibility.

When you look at those three words—justification, sanctification, glorification—it's a very good picture of the pilgrimage of the Christian's life.

One thing about sanctification we need to understand...[UNCLEAR]...go to work, you are evaluated on your performance. That is not what sanctification or righteousness is about. You are not evaluated on your performance. You're evaluated on your faith in the person and work of Christ of Jesus Christ who is the one who performed all things for you. You get credit for his sinless perfection and perfect obedience. That's the beauty of justification by faith alone.

The way it goes is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. That would be the Five Solas, the five alone's—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (not in works, not in my performance, not even in my duties). It's in his performance. It's in his accomplishments; what he accomplished on the cross. By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. That's how it all works. Hopefully some of those statements are true that I made.

[UNCLEAR]...five, continuing our examination of the Sermon on the Mount, we looking at the Beatitudes. Today we come to Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." And may God...[UNCLEAR]...behold wonderful things from his Word.

In these first four Beatitudes, there's a definite progression of spiritual awakening and transformation that must be noted as one of the single thrusts that the Lord is teaching us in this Beatitude introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. Remember this is his first staff meeting. He's telling his followers, his disciples, this is who you will become and how you will live as a kingdom citizen. He's giving us the character and witness of the citizens of the kingdom of God. [UNCLEAR]...

It's a very significant progression we see in these first four Beatitudes. They're not just randomly imposed upon us. There's a divine sequence that we need to understand as we come into this fifth Beatitude. Notice the sequence here. First of all, there's a discovery of the fact that I am nothing, that I have nothing and I can do nothing. That's your first Beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It basically means this—I am nothing, I have nothing and I can do nothing. That's where it all starts.

Secondly, there's this conviction of your sin as a realization of your nothingness. There's a conscientiousness of guilt producing godly sorrow. That's what we call mourning over our sin. This is not grieving over the loss of something in our life; it's mourning over the condition of my sin, that my life is an offense to God in my sinfulness, and therefore I need a Savior.

***Audience Member:*** *What was the verse again?*

We're in Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy." So secondly...  
...[UNCLEAR]...there's a renouncing of our self-dependency and our own strength to live according to the power of God. That's meekness. Meekness is not weakness. It's living under the power of God.

I happened to be listening to the radio, just turned it on as I was coming here this morning and listening to ESPN and Mike and Mike in the morning. One of the Mike's made the comment, he said something about this guy's young basketball player. He's very, very aggressive. He doesn't play with meekness. Now I thought, "That's exactly wrong." You see, you would want a player to play with meekness. You'd want him to play with power under control. He's saying meekness is weakness.

[UNCLEAR]...the world has of meekness. They think that meekness means you're a doormat, you're not aggressive, you're not manly, you're not whatever it is, you're just a doormat. But opposite is true when you understand the biblical understanding of meekness. It really is power under control. If I were a coach, I would want all my players to play with meekness. I'd want them to play with power, but I would want that power to be under control.

We go from poor in spirit to mourning to meekness, and then the fourth one we looked at last week is hungering and thirsting for righteousness. There's an intense desire, an intense longing, after the righteousness of Christ. You're wrapped in the robes of righteousness, you're given the righteousness of Christ. It is an external righteousness. It's an alien righteousness; not your own. But you desire more of that in your own life so that you can express your gratitude for the righteousness that you received in Christ. That's hungering and thirsting. That means you become your own motivation. You become your own reward system. Your reward system is not your external activity. Your reward system is you desire for the hunger and thirst for righteousness that you get in Christ. You become your own reward system.

[UNCLEAR]...together, and they follow a sequence. Basically all have to do with what I would call the negative side of our faith. It's our perception of what is defective in us. You look at those first four, you say there's something defective in me, in those first four. That's by design. We have a yearning for what is desirable. When you recognize what you don't have, it gives you the idea that this is what I would like to have.

Now we move into the next four Beatitudes, and they become much more of a positive illustration, or a positive good, in the believer's life. These are the fruits of the new creation of the first four. In other words, number five, "Blessed are the merciful," is really a result of the first four, of understanding poor in spirit, understanding mourning, understanding meekness, and understanding hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Those are...[UNCLEAR]...we desire and we now...[UNCLEAR]...because it's an expression of the character of Christ.

This is really a description of a transformed character. Now we talk about some of the positive things that are results of the first four. My point of all of this, brothers, is this. These are in a divinely ordained sequence. You should never overlook the fact the one leads to two, two leads to three, three leads to four, and now four leads to five. These are not just randomly positioned there in the Scripture. There's a divine sovereignty behind all of these, and as part of our understanding of the Beatitudes is the sequence in which they are recorded.

Now we move...[UNCLEAR]...to expression of the positive good that we have as a result of the transformed character of the first four. We need to be careful...[UNCLEAR]...legalistically which would...[UNCLEAR]...that God's mercy is essentially contingent upon my own. That's not what its saying. It's not saying that, "Well, if you're merciful, I'll be merciful to you." There's not a legalistic works orientation here. This is the fruit of a transformed life is what we will see.

You see, that would fall us back...[UNCLEAR]...that would say basically, "If you obey, if you love me, I will be your God, and when you don't obey, I won't be your God." You see, that would take us...that legalistic approach would take us back into the old covenant. We are now under the new arrangement, which is, "I will be your God and I will be your source of power."

[UNCLEAR]...is the nature of...[UNCLEAR]... "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy," the Scripture says. [UNCLEAR]...to teach a works-oriented salvation...[UNCLEAR]...works mentality and the more merciful...[UNCLEAR]...upon which a sinner's hope of mercy is obtained, but rather to describe the character of a genuine, true, converted believer. This is an expression of the transformed Christian life as a result of the first four. In other words...[UNCLEAR]...

[UNCLEAR]...and one of the expressions of that now is you take on a...[UNCLEAR]...and your life becomes an expression of mercy. Mercifulness...[UNCLEAR]...an essential feature of the holy character which God calls us to live. It's [UNCLEAR] connected to the enjoyment of his...[UNCLEAR]...to be understood in the context of several other truths...[UNCLEAR]...pray is, "Lord, I just want what I deserve." Don't ever ask that. The Scripture makes it very clear, the Old and the New Testament both have the same standard. The Old Testament says this, "The soul that sins shall die," and the New Testament says, "The wages of sin is death." So don't ever ask, "I just want what I deserve."

I think I've given you this illustration several times. When I was with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in Chicago, I used conduct worship services on the Lord's Day for the professional athletic teams. One year I was...[UNCLEAR]...happened to be during the baseball strike, so I was teaching on greed. They didn't invite me back the next week.

I was conducting this chapel service. I was talking about greed. I was teaching from Psalm 103, that the Lord does not treat us as our sins deserve. This young man came up to me afterward, whose name if I mentioned it, you would recognize it just like that, but he's not given me permission to give his name publicly, so I won't, but I'll tell you the story. He came up to me afterward and said, "I'm not greedy. I just want one more penny than the highest paid player in baseball. I just want what I deserve." I said, "Friend, don't ever ask for what you deserve. You might just get it." He just looked at me like, "Where are you coming from?" I said, "Where are you going?" {LAUGHTER}

My point is this. We need to understand that justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. Do you realize that everybody has experienced the mercy of God? It's just they don't know it yet. They don't know it yet because they haven't gotten all that they deserve. You see, my very first breath as a newborn babe was an act of sin. From that point on, why didn't I die? Mercy. You see, everybody has experienced God's mercy. It's just that they don't know that yet.

Part of our calling is to introduce them into the mercy of God who deals with them with justice through the cross of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice, which met the penalty, and paid the penalty for God's law and satisfied his law. That's mercy. Justice, mercy, and then grace is getting what you don't deserve. We need to understand all three of those, that they fall in the same context. Justice, mercy and grace.

Grace and mercy are often used synonymously, but there is a difference. Here's the difference. Grace is a loving response when love is undeserved. Therefore our definition of grace is getting something that you don't deserve. Grace is a love response where love is undeserved.

Mercy is a loving response, prompted by the misery of the one on which the love is given. In other words, the reason that God is merciful is because he sees how miserable we are. There's a difference. Grace is undeserved. You don't deserve it. But he gives it to us. Mercy is that he sees how miserable we are, and he gives us his grace. There's a difference between grace and mercy, so please don't get them confused because they are not synonyms. There's a radical difference between the two.

Jesus says that we are to be merciful. The mercifulness of this passage, Matthew 5:7, is the product of the new nature that is implanted by the Holy Spirit in the new child of God. That's why it is one of the evidences of true saving faith. It is called into exercise when we contemplate his wonderful grace, when we consider his pity, when we consider his longsuffering of God toward us as unworthy sinners. You see, what prompts you and me to be merciful is the realization of how merciful God has been to us. That's what Jesus is saying. This is not something that you earn, that you work out your salvation by being merciful and therefore you get credit for being merciful. We don't get credit for being merciful.

The credit comes in the person and work of Christ of Christ alone.

What we do is we express our gratitude for God's mercy to us as sinful people, and we give that away. That's what you've heard me say for years, that ministry is giving away to someone else what God has given you. The reason that you and I are merciful, as an expression of our true saving faith, is because we have received what? God's mercy. You've now got something to give away. There's your definition of ministry.

Jesus is saying that mercifulness is really one of the indicators of true saving faith. There's been a transformation in your life by the implantation of the Holy Spirit. He's removed your heart of stone and given you a heart of flesh. He now puts in you spiritual desires that you did not have before. One of those indications of true saving faith, of regeneration, of new birth, is your desire to be merciful, because it's an expression of Christ himself.

The degree to which you and I understand how merciful God has been to us will be the degree to which we will be merciful to others. In other words, the more we ponder God's sovereign mercy to us, the more you think about that, the more we shall think of the unquenchable fire from which we have been delivered through the sufferings of the person and work of Christ. In other words, think of your own condition and think of what it cost God to save you. That's what's going to produce our mercy. You see, that's one of the great themes of the Scripture is to remind them.

Paul, in his numerous letters to the Church in the pastoral Epistles always says, "Remind them. Remember." The word remember means to be full of mind. We need to be full of mind of how merciful God has been to us so that we can be merciful to someone else. That's why we say that when we are merciful we receive mercy. It's not that we've earned it. It's now that we have something to give.

That's why...if you'll take a look at 2 Corinthians 4:1...you know, we talk about our mantra, which is an M8. We are mission minded members of a movement (the movement is the kingdom of God) motivated by mercy. Now where do we get that? Several places. First of all, in the Beatitudes, but secondly, look at 2 Corinthians 4:1, "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart." What is our motivation? Our motivation is mercy. Mission minded-member of a movement motivated by mercy—not by merit, but by mercy. Because you understand this—that ministry is not the result of human achievement; it's a consequence of divine mercy. That's what Paul is telling the church at Corinth. Ministry is not a result of your activities. It's not a result of your skill set. It's not a result of your training or your education or your experience. Now I'm not saying those are not important. I'm saying that is not the motivation for your ministry. The motivation for ministry comes from the realization of how merciful God has been to me as a sinner.

That's what motivates me to be a mission minded-member of a movement motivated by mercy. The reason you and I do not lose heart, we don't give up, is because we understand God's mercy to us; therefore, we hang in there. That's why Christian people ought to be the most merciful people and the most diligent people because we do not lose heart because we understand that ministry is not a result of what I do. It's a consequence of divine mercy. God permits me to be involved in what he's doing. That's why you don't lose heart.

We are mission minded members of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace. The marketplace is wherever you are. It's the world. That's our marketplace. Where you are in your ministry base. You just don't show up on Sunday and on the Lord's Day be involved in ministry. It's when you go to K-Mart, it's when you're at Sunoco buying gas, it's when you're playing golf, it's when you're with your family. Wherever you are, that is your marketplace. We are motivated by mercy.

Take another example. Go to Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” You see there are several key truths there. First of all is remember. In other words, what is it that is your motivation, and my motivation, to live a life that is holy and blameless before God as an expression of gratitude? It’s the understanding of remembering his mercies.

Paul is saying, “Therefore, through God’s mercies, remember this...” If you want to know what God’s mercies are, read the first 11 chapters of the book of Romans, then you’ll see God’s mercies outlined for you very, very descriptively, very, very clearly. It’s the remembering of those mercies of the first 11 chapters that Paul says, “Now the consequence of your understanding and being full of mind of the mercies of God toward you as a sinner, is your motivation now to live a holy life.” You see, God even gives us the motivation. The motivation is remembering how merciful he has been.

Notice what the act of worship is. Worship is not something you do on the Lord’s Day from 11:00 to 12:00. Worship is how you live. Worship is a life experience. It’s a life experience of living. Worship is living. You and I live a worshipful life. Everything that we do is an act of worship. It’s because we’re constantly reminding ourselves, we are full of mind, of God’s mercies. I would encourage you, brothers, if you ever want to understand what God’s mercies are, read the first 11 chapters, because the word “therefore” is critical. You ask yourself what is the therefore there for? It is to remind you to go back and read the first 11 chapters so you’ll understand now why you are motivated to live a holy life, and that’s an act of worship. God now even gives us the motivation for worship. It’s remembering. It’s remembering his mercies and how merciful he’s been to us.

The more conscientious we are of the indebtedness that we have to divine grace, getting that which we don’t deserve, the more mercifully we shall be and act toward those who wrong us, those who injure us or those who even hate us. You see, because, you’ve got something to give that you didn’t have before, and that is remembrance of God’s mercies.

You see, that’s what it means to live meekly—power under control. What we have now is God gives us the resources to live the Christian life. You and I were never designed to live the Christian life. We can’t do that. All we can do is trust the life of the one who did live the Christian life, and that’s Christ himself, for his resources. That means this—that you and I should never run out of mercy because God never runs out of mercy. That doesn’t mean it’s going to be easy. Sometimes it’s a battle of the mind. There are certain times when you do not want to be merciful, I don’t want to be merciful. The last thing I want to do is to be kind and merciful because I’m vengeful, I have an ego, and I want to get back at them because I have a right, don’t I. That’s the mentality we think.

But really, when you become a believer, brothers, you give up all your rights and they become responsibilities. Now I have a responsibility to be a mission minded-member of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace. I now have something to give away. The degree to which I’m able to give away is the degree to that which I am full of mind, that I remember. When I remember God’s mercies, I now give that away.

I think you know one of the ways in which I created my own little psychology thing here called replacement therapy. It’s just something I work on myself. When somebody stimulates something within me that is less than godly, which is frequently, I know that at that moment, I need to replace it with something. That’s what I call replacement therapy. What I try to do is, keep my mouth shut, first of all. Exodus 14:14 is my life’s verse, “I will fight for you while you remain silent.” That’s kept me out of more trouble than anything else. Sometimes my best response is this...silence. That’s not what I want to do, but I know that’s what I need to do. That’s where the grace of God...that’s power under control. You see, you don’t have to live like you used to.

I remember the day that my brother got married. I'd introduced him to his wife. I was very ornery as a younger brother. I won't tell you that, no. {LAUGHTER} She came up to me after the wedding and said, this, "Can't you be serious about anything?" Now some of you would say now, "Can't you be happy about anything? Can't you be relaxed about anything?" I mean the contrast from what she said then and who I am now is radically different. There's been a huge transformation, and she has certainly recognized that. But she said to me, "Can't you be serious about anything?"

You see, sometimes, the old nature creeps back in and there are certainly things you just don't want to do, like I don't want to be merciful all the time. That's where you have to be full of mind and remember God's mercy to you so that you have something to give away. In my own particular discipline, at that point in my life, I say to myself, "First of all, keep your mouth shut." Secondly, do something for them that is an act of kindness and expect nothing in return. Do something for that person as an act of kindness—mercy—and expect nothing back. Now I do that, not for their sake, I do that for whose sake? My own. Who needs to do that? The one who needs to see me do that is me, not them, because that is one of the ways in which I can begin to control my natural tendency to want to get back as opposed to what Jesus is saying, "Blessed are the merciful," because I really do have something to give, and it's not from my own nature; it's my transformed nature as a result of regeneration in the Holy Spirit. You now have something to give away.

What I try to do in those situations is try to do an act of kindness to someone else and expect nothing in return as a means of managing myself. It's managing me. It's not managing that person, because first of all, I realize this. I can't change that person, so I've got to get over that, thinking that if I do an act of kindness, they're going to change. That's ridiculous. I can't change anybody, and neither can you. The only you can do is manage yourself, and do it in a way that remembers God's mercy so that I can become a living sacrifice. That's not easy, but that's power under control. That's meekness. That's hungering and thirsting after righteousness. It's realizing that I am nothing and I must depend upon him for everything.

Mercifulness is one of the attributes of the spiritual nature that one receives at the new birth. Mercifulness in the child of God is but a reflection of the abundant mercy that is found in our Heavenly Father. You see, it's a reflection of your regeneration. It's an expression. By your fruits, you shall know them. Mercifulness is one of the natural and necessary consequences of a merciful Christ indwelling within us. It's an expression of Christ's indwelling within us. It may not always be exercised, and sometimes it's going to be stifled or checked by the fleshly temptations, but when the general tenor of a Christian's character, and the main tendency of his life, are taken into account, it is clear that mercifulness must be one of the first expressions of true conversion.

Take a look at Psalm 37:21, "The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives." You see, what's one of the expressions of hungering and thirsting after righteousness? It's showing mercy. Showing mercy. Notice this, some biblical examples of the showing of mercy as an expression of hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

It was mercy in Abraham, after he had been wronged by his nephew, that caused him to pursue and secure the deliverance of Lot in Genesis 14. It was mercy on the part of Joseph, after his brothers had so grievously mistreated him and tried to kill him, that caused him to freely forgive them (Genesis 50). It was mercy. It was mercy in Moses, after Miriam had rebelled against him and the Lord had smitten her with leprosy, that caused him to cry out, "Hear me now O God, I beseech thee" (Numbers 12) It was mercy that caused David to spare the life of his enemy, Saul, when the wicked king was at his hand. He chose not to give him back what he wanted, or even what he deserved. He chose to be merciful. You can read about that in 1 Samuel 24.

Contrast that with this. It's a sad and striking contrast of Judas. It is said that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor. See the contrast between Abraham, Moses, David, Joseph and Judas? Judas was described as he remembered not to show mercy, but he persecuted the poor. Mercy is one of the expressions of true saving faith. We are to be compassionate toward the miserable and helpless. If we are not merciful, we should be shown mercy. The one who is not merciful is so unaware of his own strife, his own state, that he thinks that he needs no mercy.

You see, the person who is not merciful says, "I don't need it; therefore, I don't need to give it." You see, what we're saying is that a true conversion says this, "I need it, therefore, I get it, therefore I have something to give." So the real issue is do you really need and do you really know that you really need God's mercy? When you are mindful of that, is when you have something to give away.

Take a look at Luke 18. It's the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Notice the difference of the two mindsets of the two people. One was motivated by merit; the other was overwhelmed by mercy. Beginning at verse 9, "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves..." Now that's the antithesis of poor in spirit, the antithesis of mourning, the antithesis of meekness, and the antithesis of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. They trusted in themselves. "That they were righteousness," you see, it was their performance, "and treated others with contempt: "<sup>10</sup>Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' <sup>13</sup>But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Now you notice that key phrase, which one went away justified? Justified means this—freedom from the penalty of your sin. It was the recognition of his sinfulness that caused the tax collector to plead for mercy. You see, the person who doesn't think they need mercy will not be merciful because they have nothing to give because they don't think they have a need for it. If I don't have a need for it, then I don't need to give it away because I can defend my own rights.

What Jesus is saying is that one of the first expressions of the positive good that comes out of the first four Beatitudes—poor in spirit, mourning, meekness and hungering and thirsting after righteousness—is the expression of mercifulness. It's a true indication of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit because your life is being transformed into the character of Christ. One of the first characteristics of the life of Christ is mercifulness.

The person who experiences mercy, reflects these Beatitudes, is aware of their spiritual bankruptcy. That's poor in spirit. Mourns over their sin. They mourn over their bankruptcy. They submit to the power of God, because of it. And they hunger to conform to his will. And thus God is merciful toward that person, that wretched person, because he recognizes himself to be wretched. Thus in being merciful to others, he is shown mercy.

You see, mercy, brothers, is one thing that you and I should never run out of because you're not the source of it. God alone is the source of mercy. The Scripture says, "For they shall receive mercy." Now these words really reveal a tremendous principle that God has ordained in his government over all lives here upon the earth. It is summarized in that well-known word "whatever a man sows, that shall he reap" (Galatians 6).

The Christian, the believer, who is merciful in his or her dealings with others will receive mercy, shall



be given to them again. We will receive merciful treatment at the hands of other people. Now with what measure you give, it shall be given to you again (Matthew 7).

Let's go to Luke 6:37-38, "<sup>37</sup>Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup>give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." This is one of my pet peeves. How often times when you have stewardship Sunday, this is the passage that people talk about. In other words, they're saying, "If you give your money, it's going to be pressed down and given back to you," so you give your one dollar, and you might get two back.

What's the context of this passage? The context is mercy. In other words, he's saying, this isn't about money; it's about mercy. When you give mercy, to the measure that you give, it will be given back to you. It has nothing to do with fund raising. It has to do with mercy raising, if you would.

Notice, "<sup>37</sup>Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup>give, and it will be given to you." Give what? Give forgiveness. Give mercy. "<sup>38</sup>Pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap." In other words, blessed are those who are merciful for they shall receive mercy. This is not about money. It's about giving away what God has given you, which is our definition of ministry, and that is that you have something to give away because you know the difference between justice, mercy and grace. So we give that which he gives us.

"He that follows after righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness and honor." (Proverbs 21:21) The one who shows mercy to others gains personally thereby. Notice Proverbs 11:17, "The merciful man does good to his own soul." That's a great, great verse. "The merciful man does good to his own soul." Who needs to see that you're merciful? You do. I do. Why do you need to see that? It's a confirmation of your regeneration. You can't do that in your own strength. You can't do that on your own. The only way you can do that is to realize that God has implanted within you a desire for hunger and thirst righteousness, which flows out of power under control, which flows over your mourning, over your sin, which flows out of the realization of your nothingness.

**Don:** [UNCLEAR]...

These are principles for the kingdom, for kingdom citizens.

**Don:** *I know, but I'm sure there are people who [UNCLEAR]...*

Well I think what he means is that mercy is one of the sovereign rules of God as he runs the universe. In that sense, it would apply to everyone. In the sense that, if a Muslim is kind to his or her captive, it may be that that captive might be kind to that person who just showed them mercy. It may come back to them. But there's no merit in that. The difference is there's no merit in that. That may be an act of kindness that somebody does and they may be motivated to not be treated so poorly the next time. So their motivation may be, "If I'm kind to him or her, maybe he'll be kind to me and I won't be beat up as much."

**Don:** [UNCLEAR]...

It's not a guarantee. It's not a guarantee. It might be...but that might be their motivation. Their motivation might be self-preservation. From a human perspective, that would be understandable. But from a spiritual perspective, there's no merit in that activity because the merit comes in the person and

work of Christ.

**Tom:** *[UNCLEAR] a tit-for-tat mentality, and I think what he's saying is you show mercy, mercy will be shown to you, not necessarily by people, but by the Lord.*

Yeah, we don't know how the mercy will be shown to us. We have to leave that up to God. Our responsibility is to be merciful. We're told that mercy will be poured back into our lap. We just don't know how that will be or by whom. But that's not our role to figure out I'm doing this to get mercy, I'm doing this to express the fact that I realize how merciful God has been to me.

**Mike:** *There's a cross-reference in my Bible to James 2:13, which I think [UNCLEAR]...*

Please read it.

**Mike:** *"For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." [UNCLEAR]...*

Absolutely. James 2:13 is a good cross-reference. Thanks, Mike.

**Audience Member:** *[UNCLEAR]...*

Would this be considered agape love?

**Audience Member:** *[UNCLEAR]...*

Well that's the heart of a servant is to do something and expect nothing in return. Agape love is sacrificial love. I think the individual person would have to ask themselves and evaluate that, "Am I doing this for what motive, and is the motive my hungering and thirsting after righteousness?" Then it's an expression of...mercy becomes an expression of that hungering and thirsting, and that becomes your own reward. That's why that Proverbs verse, in my mind, is so important, "The one who does mercy, it's good for his own soul." The one who needs to see you being merciful is you, yourself, not the world, because you're not doing it to get accolades, you're not doing it get a pat on the back, you're not doing this as a performance. You're doing this as an expression of your understanding of being motivated by God's mercy in your own life.

As we wrap this up, I think there a couple of questions, you would notice on your handout, that I would ask that you might consider in your own mind. Remember the whole key to any Bible study is what am I going to do about what I just learned. Here are just some questions I would propose for you. Am I merciful or condescending to the wretched? How do you respond to those people who have less than we do? Am I gentle or hard-hearted toward the downtrodden? Am I helpful or callous toward the backslidden? Am I compassionate or callous toward the lost or toward the fallen?

Showing mercy is an expression of the fact that, in reality, we have been touched by the very heart of God. One of the most convicting things for me, brothers, is this. When I realize how quickly I do not want to be merciful. It reveals more about me than it does the person who just treated me that way. It reveals more about me. One of the things that I grieve over more than anything else is how slow I am in wanting to be merciful. You see, that really grieves me because it's really an indication that there's something in me that needs to be transformed. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. May we express our understanding of the first four Beatitudes—poor in spirit, mourning, meekness and hungering and thirsting after righteousness—that the first expression of understanding those first four is a mission minded-member of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace. Ministry,

for us, brothers, is not the result of our human achievement. It's a consequence of God's divine mercy. He permits us to be involved in what he is doing. That, dear friends, is a supreme act of sovereign mercy.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the power of your truth. We just pray that you would set us free from our own expectations of what we need to be, and that through your Holy Spirit, you will conform us to the image of Christ. We know that you will will and do work that you started within us and do it for your will. We pray that you will continue to work in us, transform us, that we might be more reflective of the true nature and the character qualities of Christ. May we understand that a disciple is one who understands the character qualities of self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-submission. And to the end, Father, be merciful to us, for we are sinners, for Jesus' sake. Amen!