

Blessed, Part 6: The Merciful

Victory Life Church, Central — Sunday, June 21, 2026

Scripture Reading

Matthew 5:1–12 (ESV)¹ Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Introduction

Matthew 5:7 (ESV)⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

If there is one virtue that could change the culture of a family or a nation, what would it be?

Blessed are the Merciful

Ἐλεήμονες — ELEĒMONES · “MERCIFUL” — Appears only twice in the New Testament.¹

There is a place for “**acts of mercy.**” This can be forgiving someone who has wronged you, showing compassion for someone who is in need or in pain, moving toward them to act on their behalf. One major example is Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan.

“Acts” of Mercy: **Luke 10:25-37 — The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

Luke 10:36-37 (ESV)³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him **mercy.**” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

Mercy is one of the **gifts** God gives to believers. Paul says to the Romans with those who have this gift...

“Gift” of Mercy: Romans 12:8

Romans 12:8 (ESV)⁸ ...the one who does acts of mercy, [do them] with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:8 (NLT)⁸ ...And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

¹ Matthew 5:7 and Hebrews 2:17

But mercy is far more than individual actions. The beatitude is not just for those who act in mercy, but to the “merciful.”

“Ethic” of Mercy: Mercy is a core ethic of the Kingdom of God.

This is seen in how Matthew weaves mercy as a key theme in His gospel. It shows how important this is to Jesus and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Mercy as the ethical center of Matthew.

Mercy is not one ethic among others in Matthew; it is the organizing ethical center.

The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:7; 6:3; 6:12, 14-15; 7:12

The Calling of Matthew: Matthew 9:9-13

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant: Matthew 18:21-35

People Crying Out for Mercy: Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30-31

The Heart of the Law: Matthew 23:23

The Final Judgment: Matthew 25:31-46

The group Jesus had the most conflict with was the Pharisees. The Pharisees had become so consumed with meticulous law-keeping, they became pretentious, self-righteous, and condescending towards others, especially the “sinners.”

Matthew 9:9–13 (ESV)⁹ As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him. ¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: **‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’** For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”²

Jesus said mercy was the very heart of the Law:

Matthew 23:23 (ESV)²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.”³

One of Jesus’ key parables was about mercy and forgiveness.

Matthew 18:21–35 (ESV)²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”⁴ ²³ “Therefore the kingdom of

² Cross Reference: Matthew 12:6-7; Hosea 6:6

³ See also Jesus’ critique of Pharisees’ Sabbath-keeping (Matt. 12:1-7), and Amos’ critique of Israel’s false worship (Amos 5:21-24). Jesus here is directly referencing Micah 6:8 — justice, mercy, faithfulness.

⁴ Cross-reference Jesus’ call for forgiveness 490-fold with Lamech’s demand for vengeance 77-fold (Gen. 4:24).

heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.³³ And should not you have had **mercy** on your fellow servant, as I had **mercy** on you?'³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother **from your heart.**"

The parable of the Unmerciful Servant makes unmistakably clear that those who have genuinely received God's forgiveness will extend it to others. The beatitude, read alongside the parable, suggests that lack of mercy is evidence that one has not truly received God's mercy, not that it earns or constitutes it.

There's a powerful and inspiring story of Corrie Ten Boom, being challenged in her message of forgiveness through a former guard at the concentration camp where she was imprisoned and where her sister died, asking for forgiveness. If we've ever been challenged to forgive what seems to be unforgivable, this story will inspire you.⁵

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."⁶ ~ C.S. Lewis

Mercy and forgiveness can be very difficult and heavy. But the alternative is *more* deadly.

Unforgiveness is a toxic poison that contaminates the heart.

It is to willfully submit to death. It perpetuates the cycle of vengeance and retribution. Unforgiveness is a poison that doesn't just contaminate one individual's heart; it spreads, infecting marriages, families, communities, societies, and nations, and many generations. Unforgiveness is to collude with death and perpetuate evil.

"To show mercy or to forgive is extremely difficult for those who have been deeply wronged. But the alternative is self-destruction through nursing grudges or seeking revenge. Such

⁵ <https://guideposts.org/articles/positive-living/guideposts-classics-corrie-ten-boom-forgiveness/>

⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book III, Chapter 8.

grievances are often passed on from generation to generation and become a destructive force in the lives of individuals and societies.”⁷ ~ Ken Bailey

Mercy is not just a virtue — it is freedom from a prison of one's own making.

"Mercy sets aside society's assumption that it is honorable to demand revenge.”⁸ ~ R.T. France.

No I don't want to battle from beginning to end
I don't want a cycle of recycled revenge
I don't want to follow death and all of his friends
~ Coldplay

To follow Jesus is to refuse to follow death, perpetuating the cycle of revenge, retribution, and retaliation. Jesus offers an alternative vision of his kingdom: mercy.

"In Matthew's Gospel, the moral is the merciful. If one wants to know what Jesus considers the heart of ethical life, it is here: mercy. Not law-observance. Not ritual purity. Not doctrinal precision. Mercy.”⁹ ~ Fredrick Dale Bruner

The whole purpose of our beliefs, practices, disciplines, and even our obedience is to produce mercy in us.

A Vision of a Merciful God

Mercy is not just to be an occasional action, nor is it simply an ethic of the Kingdom Jesus brings. It is also to permeate our character, not just our actions. It is a virtue that Jesus’ disciples are expected to cultivate.

“Virtue” of Mercy: Being merciful is a core virtue in Jesus’ disciples.

If you have followed each of the beatitudes up to this point, you see that the first four are showing a dependence on God’s character: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. This beatitude expresses the kind of character of someone who has been transformed by the grace described in the first four.

Matthew 5:7 (ESV)⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

The “merciful” describes someone whose heart is bent toward mercy.

Mercy is not just an action we choose to perform; being merciful is a heart condition that makes us unable to remain unmoved by suffering. Merciful means habitual character, not

⁷ Ken Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, p. 83.

⁸ R.T. France, *Matthew (NICNT)*, p. 168.

⁹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook*, p. 178.

occasional impulse. Those who live by habitual mercy have "responded to God's love and are living by his grace."

Mercy as participation in divine character.

Someone who has received grace and mercy from our Heavenly Father. Grace is receiving what you *did not* deserve, mercy is *not* receiving what you *did* deserve. God is merciful. One who has encountered the mercy of God is more able to show mercy to others.

Mercy is the evidence of grace received, not the payment for grace to be given.

Luke 6:35–36 (ESV)³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶ **Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.**¹⁰

Luke 7:40–48 (ESV)⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ **Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven— for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.**" ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

God is merciful. One who has experienced God's mercy is able to show mercy.

Luke 15:11-32 — The Parable of the Prodigal Son

"The worldly wise will, of course, say, 'Woe to the merciful, for they shall be taken advantage of.' And outside heaven's rule there is nothing more true."¹¹ ~ Dallas Willard

There is a Final Judgment

Matthew 5:7 (ESV)⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Ἐλεηθῆσονται — "SHALL RECEIVE MERCY" — DIVINE PASSIVE — Passive, indicating divine action: God will show mercy to the merciful. The parallel structure is unique — the only beatitude where the promised blessing exactly mirrors the state described.

¹⁰ Cross-reference with James 5:7-11.

¹¹ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 117.

Psalms 18:25–26 (ESV)²⁵ With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; ²⁶ with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.

The inescapable connection between receiving and giving mercy.

Galatians 6:7–10 (ESV)⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

One critical thing to remember is that a day of judgment is coming. There is no way around this. It is too frequent a theme in the New Testament to ignore. We need to be reminded that how we live now makes a difference when our lives are evaluated. We are saved exclusively by the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, without any merit of our own. But because we have received God's mercy, there is a calling and expectation to extend that same mercy.

Matthew 6:14–15 (ESV)¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

James 2:8–13 (ESV)⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. **Mercy triumphs over judgment.**

James 2:13 (NLT)¹³ There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

In order to develop the capacity for and virtue of mercy, it may be necessary to see how mercy balances with God's justice. Romans 12 helps balance God's justice against evildoers and His call for us to walk in peace with one another. There is comfort in knowing God will act justly in His mercy and we can trust Him.

Romans 12:14–21 (NLT)¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! ¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord. ²⁰ Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to

drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.” ²¹ Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Conclusion

“Oh, how happy you would be if...

“Oh, what a good life you would have if...

“Your life is flourishing when...

- You are not easily offended
- You don’t get riled up so easily
- You didn’t feel the need to judge everyone’s behaviors
- You didn’t have to calculate what people deserve or not
- You could let things go and be merciful to others

Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.