

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Matthew 5:7

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Everybody wants to be happy. We're all searching for happiness. But how do you find it? Throughout history people have tried different things. The New Testament mentions two Greek philosophies that were popular in that day – Stoicism and Epicureanism. Each had its own idea about how to find happiness. The Stoics believed in determinism. They believed that your fate was sealed. Your life has already been planned out, and you cannot change it. The only freedom you have is how you mentally respond to your circumstances. Therefore, for Stoics, the key to happiness is imperturbability – don't let anything perturb you. Don't let anything make you angry or anxious or depressed. Their mantra could be "Que sera, sera," or "What will be, will be." The Epicureans, on the other hand, rejected determinism. To them, the secret to happiness is to attain pleasure and avoid pain; avoid physical pain and seek peace of mind.
2. But in the first century a new teacher emerged on the scene, and He taught His own philosophy of how to be happy that differed from Stoicism and Epicureanism. His name is Jesus Christ. Why should we listen to Jesus? For one thing, He claimed to speak the words of God. When He taught, He wasn't merely speculating, or theorizing, or giving His opinion, He claimed that His words were truth without any mixture of error. Second, He predicted His death and resurrection multiple times and then pulled it off. Some people choose to follow the teachings of dead philosophers. I choose to follow the man who rose from the grave.
3. What did Jesus teach about happiness? He taught about happiness in a section of Scripture we now call the beatitudes. The word "beatitude" comes from the Latin word *beatus*, meaning blessed, or happiness. The beatitudes are eight sayings that begin with the word "blessed," which means "happy." Let's read a few.
4. **Matthew 5:3-6** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be

comforted. Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

5. The word “blessed” just means happy. In the beatitudes Jesus explains that the secret to happiness is not imperturbability, as the Stoics taught. It is not attaining pleasure and avoiding pain, as the Epicureans taught. And it is not found in the Ps which are so dominant today – pleasure, possessions, power, position, and praise. The secret to happiness is to cultivate the eight qualities that Jesus describes. The secret to happiness is to become poor in spirit, to mourn, to be humble (or gentle), to hunger and thirst for righteousness, etc. As you cultivate those qualities, happiness finds you. So in this sermon series we are taking one beatitude at a time and studying it deeply.
6. This morning we are going to take a look at the fifth beatitude.

II. TEXT

1. **Matthew 5:7** Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
2. Remember that each beatitude contains a promise, a condition, and a reason. (1) You will be happy (2) if you cultivate this quality (3) for this reason. So this beatitude says (1) You will be happy (2) if you are merciful (3) because you will be shown mercy.
3. This beatitude is all about the quality of mercy. Mercy is an important virtue for several reasons.
4. First, God is merciful, and we are commanded to imitate God.
 - i. **Luke 1:50** His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him.
 - ii. The Bible says that God is rich in mercy.
 1. **Ephesians 2:4** But God, who is rich in mercy....
 - iii. In fact, the Bible describes salvation as an act of mercy. You don’t obtain eternal life because of your good works, but because of God’s mercy.
 1. **Titus 3:5** he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy
5. Second, it is commanded.
 - i. **Luke 6:36** Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.
6. Third, it is required to surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees.

- i. Do you remember that Jesus said if you want to go to heaven your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees (Mt 5:20)? One of Jesus' biggest criticisms of the Pharisees was their lack of mercy. They were careful to follow the rules, but they were not merciful toward their fellow human beings. On several occasions He said to them...
 - ii. **Matthew 12:7** I desire mercy and not sacrifice.
7. So how can you cultivate the quality of mercy in your life? The Bible describes three ways to show mercy.

III. THREE WAYS TO SHOW MERCY

1. Help the needy.

- i. **Charles Quarles** "Thus, the present beatitude relates to showing compassion to the needy through deeds of kindness."
- ii. **John Stott** "Mercy is compassion for people in need."
- iii. **Jerry Bridges** "mercy seeks to meet the physical needs of others"
- iv. **John Calvin** "They are blessed who are prepared to put up with their own troubles, but also take on other peoples', to help them in distress, freely to join them in their time of trial, and as it were, to get right into their situation, that they may gladly expend themselves on their assistance." Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels*
- v. In other words, "Happy is the person who helps the need." This promise is found in the OT as well.
 - 1. **Psalm 41:1** "Happy is one who is considerate of the poor."
- vi. We see in both the Old and New Testaments that God cares about the poor, and He wants His people to care for them too. In fact, God's method of caring for the poor is through the mercy of His people.
- vii. Mercy for the poor was written into the OT law (see also Lev 25:35; Dt 15:7-8).
 - 1. **Leviticus 19:9-10** "When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor and the resident alien; I am the LORD your God."

- viii. Mercy for the poor is a trait of the person who fears the Lord and is righteous.
 - 1. **Psalm 112:1, 9** Hallelujah! Happy is the person who fears the LORD, taking great delight in his commands... He distributes freely to the poor.”
- ix. God takes it very personally when you mistreat the poor or show them mercy.
 - 1. **Proverbs 14:31** The one who oppresses the poor person insults his Maker, but one who is kind to the needy honors him.
- x. The NT says that we should devote ourselves to helping the needy, and this is the way to be a fruitful and productive Christian.
 - 1. **Titus 3:14 (NLT)** Our people must learn to do good by meeting the urgent needs of others; then they will not be unproductive.
- xi. Paul said that Christians should be rich in showing mercy to the needy.
 - 1. **1 Timothy 6:18** Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others.
- xii. One of the distinguishing marks of the first church was mercy to the poor.
 - 1. **Acts 4:34-35** For there was not a needy person among them because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet. This was then distributed to each person as any had need.
- xiii. James said that Christianity comes down to two things: mercy and holiness.
 - 1. **James 1:27** Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
- xiv. The best illustration of mercy to the needy is the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). Someone asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus said, “Love God and love your

neighbor.” The man said, “And who is my neighbor?” So Jesus told the story of the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:37). A Jewish man was attacked, robbed, and left half-dead on the side of the road. A Jewish priest saw him but passed on the other side of the road. A Jewish Levite did the same thing. But then a Samaritan passed by. It’s important to understand that at that time Jews and Samaritans hated each other. But when the Samaritan saw the injured man, he had “compassion”; he felt deeply sorry for the man. He went over to him, bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put him on his animal, brought him to a hotel, and took care of him. The next day he gave some money to the hotel manager and said, “Take care of him, and I’ll pay you back for whatever extra you spend.” Then Jesus said, “Which of the three men proved to be a neighbor to the injured man?” The man said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus told him, “Go and do the same.”

- xv. Mercy is helping the needy. When you see the poor, go and do the same. When you see the needy, go and do the same. When you see people suffering, go and do the same. When you see someone in danger, go and do the same. Keep your eyes open for urgent, pressing needs, and go and do the same.

2. Evangelize the lost.

- i. **John Stott** "Mercy is compassion for people in need."
- ii. Mercy is helping the needy. What is humanity’s greatest need? Salvation. Who are the most needy people in the world? The lost. Those without a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Thus, mercy also involves evangelism.
- iii. What is evangelism? Sharing the gospel with lost people so they can get in on it if they want to.
- iv. The Puritan **Thomas Watson** calls evangelism “soul-mercy.”
- v. **James Montgomery Boice** “Mercy is love reaching out to help those who are helpless and who need salvation.”
- vi. **Jerry Bridges** “But what about the spiritual needs of the poor and needy? Suppose we were able, by the generous giving of all Christians, to raise multitudes of men, women, and children out of

abject poverty into a livable and decent standard of living. If we were to do that to the neglect of their eternal destiny, we would have done them a fatal disservice. As Jesus said, ‘For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?’”

- vii. We see this kind of mercy shown by Jesus Himself. One time Jesus was having dinner at the home of a recently-converted tax collector, and the tax collector invited all of his sinful friends over to meet Jesus. Why would Jesus want to hang out with a bunch of sinners? To save them! The Pharisees did not like this. They asked the disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” Notice Jesus’ response.
- viii. **Matthew 9:12-13** Now when he heard this, he said, “It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners.”
- ix. Jesus described His actions – befriending sinners in order to evangelize them – as an act of mercy.
- x. To see how evangelism is the ultimate act of mercy, you need to understand some things:
 - 1. People will live forever, either in heaven or hell. The Bible doesn’t teach conditional immortality – the idea that only believers live forever, while unbelievers cease to exist after death. If that was the case, then hell loses its horror.
 - 2. Hell is the place of conscious, eternal torment. Hell is not a place where you can party with all of your other irreligious friends. It is the most terrible place you can imagine. Darkness, pain, weeping and gnashing of teeth, isolation, for all eternity.
 - 3. The only way to be saved from hell is to believe in Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16). The Bible is clear that people who die without Christ go to hell.
 - 4. The only way people can believe in Jesus Christ is if someone shares the gospel with them.

- xi. Thus, evangelism, or sharing the gospel with lost people, is the most merciful thing you can do.
- xii. Thomas Watson said that if you saw someone's house burning but you don't tell him because you don't want to wake him up, that's cruel. Likewise, if you see that someone is on their way to hell and you don't tell him because you don't want to upset him, not only is that cruel, but you are an accessory to their death!
- xiii. Mercy includes soul-mercy – evangelizing the lost.
- xiv. Do you have coworkers who aren't saved? Have mercy and share the gospel. Do you have friends and family members who aren't saved? Have mercy and share the gospel. Do you have classmates and teammates who aren't saved? Have mercy and share the gospel.
- xv. You might get rejected. You might get mocked. Have mercy and share the gospel. You might make them upset. You might offend them. Have mercy and share the gospel.
- xvi. Aren't you glad someone shared the gospel with you? If you were on your way to hell, wouldn't you want someone to share the gospel with you?
- xvii. Sharing the gospel is easy. You only need to know the four Cs.
 - 1. Creation: God created you to have a relationship with Him.
 - 2. Corruption: Your sins separate you from God.
 - 3. Cross: God sent His Son to pay for your sins.
 - 4. Choice: You can be forgiven if you repent and have faith in Jesus Christ.
- xviii. There are many ways to share the gospel. In a conversation. In an email. On social media. Give them a book. Or invite them to hear the gospel at church.
- xix. During the early to mid-twentieth centuries, the liberal denominations abandoned the gospel and focused solely on meeting people's material needs. This was called the social gospel. They focused on the social gospel rather than the spiritual gospel. They focused on the needs of the body rather than the needs of the soul; on man's temporal needs rather than eternal needs. In response, many Bible believing churches erred to the

opposite extreme. To make sure that they didn't neglect evangelism, they gave up on meeting people's physical needs; they gave up on helping the poor and needy. But both sides are wrong. We need to meet people's spiritual and physical needs. We need to help the poor, but we also need to evangelize the lost. And those who are most passionate about evangelism need to keep this in mind. Our evangelism will be much more effective when the world sees how much we have done to meet the needs of the poor. The old adage is correct: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

3. Forgive the sinner.

- i. **Charles Quarles** "Mercy involves more than generous giving to the needy. It also involves forgiving others for their sins as an expression of gratitude to God for His gracious forgiveness."
- ii. **William Hendriksen** "Mercy is love for those in misery and a forgiving spirit toward the sinner."
- iii. **Jerry Bridges** "Mercy expresses itself in two general areas: In the temporal sense, mercy seeks to meet the physical needs of others, as the Good Samaritan did in Jesus' parable. The second way mercy expresses itself in granting forgiveness to those who have sinned against us."
- iv. Thomas Watson called forgiveness both the touchstone and crown of Christianity. By touchstone he means the evidence. Forgiveness is true test or evidence of salvation. And by crown he means the king, or the most important of all the virtues.
- v. **Watson** goes on to describe forgiveness as heroic. It's easy to be unforgiving and bitter and resentful and to hold a grudge. That comes naturally and takes no effort or strength. But forgiveness takes strength. "To overcome evil with good and answer malice with mercy is truly heroic and renders religion glorious in the eyes of all."
- vi. This kind of mercy is illustrated best in another of Jesus' parables called the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18:21-35). It began with Peter asking Jesus a question.

- vii. **Matthew 18:21-22** Then Peter approached him and asked, “Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?” “I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven.”
- viii. In other words, your forgiveness should be like God’s – limitless. Then Jesus illustrated forgiveness with a story.
- ix. A king wanted to settle accounts his servants. One servant owed him ten thousand talents, or the equivalent of \$6 billion. Since he couldn’t pay up, the king ordered that he and his entire family be thrown in prison and everything he owned sold to pay the debt. So the man begged for mercy. He said, “Just give me time and I’ll pay it back.” The king felt compassion and forgave his debt. Later on, that same servant went and found his friend who owed him some money. He owed him a hundred denarii, or \$12,000 in today’s money. The servant demanded payment from his friend, so his friend begged for mercy. But he didn’t show him mercy. He threw him into prison. When the king heard of this he was furious.
- x. **Matthew 18:32-33** Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Shouldn’t you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’
- xi. Notice two things. First, Jesus equates mercy with forgiveness. “I forgave you... Shouldn’t you also have had mercy on your fellow servant?” To be merciful is to be forgiving.
- xii. Second, don’t miss the point of the story. God has forgiven you so much that it would be wrong to not forgive others. The king represents God, and the servant represents us. Like the servant, all of us are \$6 billion debtors to God. We have sinned against Him and we can’t save ourselves. Our only hope is forgiveness, which God freely grants us. When someone sins against us, while it is painful, it is nothing compared to what we have done to God. It is a \$12,000 debt compared to a \$6 billion debt. Therefore, as recipients of such rich forgiveness, it would be sinful to withhold

mercy from people whose sins against us are minor compared to our sins against God.

- xiii. What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is the decision to do good to your enemy and the willingness to be reconciled.
- xiv. Even if they don't repent do good to them. And if they are repentant and turn from their sins, then you must be willing to be reconciled to them.
- xv. Jesus spoke about this kind of mercy in Luke 6.
- xvi. **Luke 6:27-28, 36** But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you... Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.
- xvii. Has someone hurt you? Forgive. Has someone lied to you? Forgive. Has someone talked bad about you behind your back, maybe even lied about you? Forgive them. Has someone called you a mean name? Forgive them. Has someone stolen from you? Forgive them. How many times? Seven? No. Seventy-times seven.

IV. **MERCY AND HAPPINESS**

1. Before we close, let's talk about the relationship between mercy and happiness. Jesus said that mercy will make you happy. How does mercy make you happy?
2. First, consider the rewards of helping the needy.
3. **Psalms 41:1-3** Happy is one who is considerate of the poor; the LORD will save him in a day of adversity. The LORD will keep him and preserve him; he will be blessed in the land. You will not give him over to the desire of his enemies. The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed; you will heal him on the bed where he lies.
4. Second, consider the fulfillment of evangelism. What could be more fulfilling and satisfying than to lead someone to salvation; to know that someone will be in heaven because of you.
5. **Romans 10:15** How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.
6. But to truly understand how mercy can lead to happiness, we just need to look back at the beatitude.
7. **Matthew 5:7** Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8. Only those who are merciful to others will receive mercy from God.
9. Does that mean you have to be merciful to be saved? Yes. To be saved you must repent and believe in Jesus. That includes repenting from being unmerciful, and uncharitable, and unforgiving. The person who refuses to repent cannot be saved.
10. But if you repent of your sins and embrace a life of mercy, then God will be merciful to you.