

“How Can I be Blessed, Part III”

Matthew 5:7

In Is. 63:7-9 we read this about God:

I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which He is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us – yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. He said, ‘Surely they are My people, sons who will not be false to Me’ and so he became their Saviour. In all their distress, he too was distressed, and the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and mercy He redeemed them: He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

In His love and mercy He redeemed Israel. In the New Testament we read the same thing about us, the Church, the body of Christ. *“But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour”* [Titus 3:5].

We are saved by the “mercy” of God. The Is. 63 passage had a good definition of mercy: *“In their distress He too was distressed.”* Mercy means to show a loving response to those who are in distress [those who can’t meet their need on their own], and to use our time and resources to meet that need. God did that for us in Jesus Christ. Mankind is lost and in a distressing situation. No one is righteous; all have sinned and come short of God’s glory. We don’t have the resources to save ourselves, but God does and He in His mercy sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins. We receive His mercy and grace when we recognize we are poor in spirit (know we are spiritually bankrupt and in need of God’s mercy) and believe that Jesus paid for our sins by His death, and proved the final penalty was paid in full when He rose from the dead.

We who are saved mourn and grieve over our sin, seek to humble ourselves in meekness [confident strength in God] and desire to passionately pursue God and His righteousness. Jesus now shows us how believers live who hunger and thirst after the things of God. We continue to experience the joy/blessedness of God when we . . .

Show others the same Mercy God has Shown us **(Matt. 5:7a)**

Blessed are the merciful, those who act like God towards those in need of forgiveness and mercy. Only those who have received God’s mercy know what it means to need mercy. And now we who have received God’s mercy are to treat others the way God wants to treat them, with mercy. How can we be prepared to show the undeserving kindness of God to others?

Remain thankful (Eph. 2:1-7)

Listen to the riches of mercy and grace given to us.

Eph. 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time,

gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Thankful believers don’t forget the mercy shown them. The more we remain thankful, the more prepared we will be show mercy to those in our life who need it.

God is conforming us more each day into the image of His Son Jesus, therefore, as we grow older we should be reflecting more the character of God. To be equipped to show others more of God’s mercy, we should be continually thankful and to always be . . .

Growing in spiritual sensitivity (Col. 3:12-14)

To show mercy we must see people as God sees them. We should be and must become more like God each day if we are to reflect His glory, His nature to our world. This is what Paul tells us in Col. 3:12-14 how we should be like God in His mercy and compassion.

Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them altogether in perfect unity.

Like getting dressed, Paul says put on God’s attitude every day with the people you work with, worship with and live with. If we have we been forgiven by God of all our sins against Him then we must forgive others “whatever” grievances we have against them. There are no buts or conditions, or exception clauses here. How can we not forgive others when we have been forgiven whatever we have sinned against God? Failure to forgive is to fail to be merciful and Christ-like.

Eph. 4:32 – *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

Mercy is not just feeling sorry for someone, but actually doing something for them. To show mercy we must

Meet practical needs at our expense (Luke 10:25-37)

In Matt. 9:27 two blind men follow Jesus and cry out: *‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’* That’s all they said. What were they asking Jesus? To do something about their blindness! Jesus responded, *‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’* Do what? Show mercy. Meet the need. Be practical.

To show mercy is to identify the need and use your resources and gifts to meet that need. Jesus had the resources to meet the need for healing blindness. The blind men asked for mercy because they were helpless and had no resources of their own to meet the need. Mercy says, I can help you.

Remember the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10? One of the religious mucky-mucks tried to get Jesus in a debate about who really is our neighbour, because the Law says we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind and our neighbour as ourselves. In the story Jesus says a Levite and a priest both saw the needs of the beaten traveller but they avoided the man. The Samaritan came by, saw the need, sacrificed his own time, energy and resources to help meet the need. When Jesus asked the man 'Which of these 3 was a neighbour to the man who was robbed and beaten' the expert in the law replied "*The one who showed mercy.*" Go and do likewise.

He saw the distress, had compassion, gave of his resources, even though the man was an 'enemy' to the Jews. Who do we know has a need? Are we able to help them? The need may be prayer. That's very practical too! We may not have the spiritual resources but we know Who does. Can we bring healing? Not the physical kind but how about the need of healed relationships? Or healing of mind? What can we do? How can we help meet those needs and show mercy? And yes, what can we do to help meet the physical needs of those in need of food, clothing, etc. We need to be involved in that in many ways. But what about the need of the gospel? People need to be saved. People are lost. When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them. So He taught them God's Word and how they can have new life in Him. To show mercy is to be practical.

But some have a tendency to harden their own hearts to mercy. Again, this beatitude like all the others is a real slap in the face to the religious leaders who showed no mercy at all. Their focus was on the letter of the law. No bending. No compromise. Don't give an inch. 'How can you be a child of God if you don't do this or if you do that' Some believers get caught up in legalism, in trivialities. If we're to show mercy, . . .

We must let go of the trivial (Matt. 9:12-13/Hos 6:6; Matt. 23:23-24)

Look at Matt. 9:12-13. The Pharisees focused on the trivial. They asked Jesus disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' Jesus' response: "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice.*' Jesus is quoting Hosea 6:6 where God told the Israelites:

"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings."

They were missing the point. Jesus will quote this again in Matt. 12:1-3 after His disciples were accused of breaking the Sabbath because they picked grain. Jesus explained how He is Lord of the Sabbath, that they were missing the point of faith in God because they were focusing on the externals not what was important.

It wasn't that God wanted people to break the Law or not sacrifice, but He wanted right hearts. He wanted people to show mercy more than keep the letter of the law, which is what obeying Him really means. Do we have any trivial hang-ups? Have we refused to fellowship with someone because of a triviality? Judged someone unfairly because of our own preference or a tradition we hold to closely? In Matt. 23:23-24 Jesus confronts the Pharisees again and says, "*You tithe even your spices, but you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.*"

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Those who are merciful are those who understand they are helpless before God and have asked for mercy from God to save them and believed in the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

How else are we blessed when we receive mercy?

By Receiving Mercy Shown us by Others **(Matt. 5:7b)**

If we are merciful to one another, we will receive mercy from each other at various times and in various ways! We all have received mercy at different times from each other. We receive mercy . . .

When people don't judge us (Matt. 7:1-2)

“Jesus said do not judge or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.” [Matt. 7:1-2]

We may have said something too harshly and it was overlooked, we may have done something that warranted our needing forgiveness and we were forgiven. We may have had a need which we lacked the resources to meet, and someone mercifully met our need.

If we treat each other mercifully, we too will be the recipients of each other's mercy at times. Be quick to hear and slow to speak what's on our mind. Be slow to condemn and judge because we don't know the person's situation or their heart. The Pharisees judged everything on the outside. They lacked mercy. When we do the same we show ourselves to be hypocrites too as Jesus called them.

Even when dispensing discipline or correcting people, let's show mercy. Because let's face it, God has been merciful to us. We too can echo the words of Ezra in Ezra 9:13 when he prayed for forgiveness from God: *“What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins deserved”*.

But we're not always treated mercifully, especially by unbelievers. Yet we will receive mercy from God even when . . .

When we endure suffering (1 Pet. 2:18-23)

In 1 Pet. 2:18 we are commanded to submit to those who have authority over us [employers, teachers, government] even if unjustly. We are commended by God when we do this because to this we were called. God gives us mercy now by His Spirit to endure the unjust sufferings from the hands of unbelievers. Like Paul admitted of himself, he acted out of ignorance when he mistreated Christians before he was saved. The unsaved mistreat us out of ignorance. They have not experienced His mercy and grace in forgiveness. So we need to treat them mercifully even when we're mistreated. Like Jesus, at times we must make no threats even when insulted; to refuse the urge to retaliate when hurt and entrust ourselves to Him who judges justly.

So there's a mutual mercy we receive from each other. There is a spiritual mercy we receive to endure unjust treatment but ultimately there is the future full mercy of God that awaits us when we meet Christ. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are forward looking people. We should look forward then to the full future mercy of God and . . .

Living with the end in mind (Jude 21)

“Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.” If we keep ourselves in God's love, we can wait for His mercy even when we don't receive it now. It will come. In Micah 6:8 we are asked, 'What does the Lord require of you?? *To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with Your God.*'

Merciful believers are thankful people, blessed people. Not only are we to be merciful but we are to love mercy. To enjoy acting with mercy to another. Why? Because the mercy we receive one day will be so overwhelming, that we'll spend all eternity thanking God for it.

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If you have any questions or comments about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net