**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 10-11-2020
Blessed Are the Merciful**

One of the stories that I remember watching as a young boy was The Karate Kid. How many of you have watched that?

And Ralph Machio still kind of looks like a kid today actually.

But I remember that being a powerful story. There was such a contrast between Mr. Miagi, who was the man that taught Daniel to use Karate for self-defense, and The Cobra Kia, a Karate school that was cruel.

Their motto was: ***Strike hard, strike fast, no mercy.***

Sounds very compassionate, huh?

But thankfully they do not win in the end.

And I think the same is true with the Lord. In the end, it is the merciful that win. Mercy is very important to God. And mercy is to be very important to us as well.

So far, we have journeyed halfway through Jesus’ beatitudes, His statements of what a blessed life truly consists of.

While the first four beatitudes characterize our dependence on God in one way or another, the next three describe the outworking of this dependence.

So we turn now to this very crucial 5th beatitude found in Matthew 5:7

**Blessed are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.**

The reality of life is that each person stands in need of God’s mercy. The Scriptures teach us that we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s perfect standard. And Jesus died on our behalf in order to offer God’s mercy to us through trusting in His death on our behalf.

Mercy is not something that we can ever earn. It is a gift to be received. We can be assured of God’s mercy towards us when we sincerely trust in His Son and in His perfect sacrifice for us. His blood was shed so we could experience God’s wonderful mercy.

Friends, God is so merciful. He is so forgiving and more compassionate than anyone. He delights in pouring out these things over people.

And Jesus not only had the means to bring about the mercy of God towards us, but He also lived out a mercy-filled life. He offered mercy and compassion again and again, not because people earned it in some way, but because of His goodness and love.

Last week I shared about how Jesus’ compassion led to many of his miracles, including food being multiplied to feed thousands.

But Jesus also expressed mercy in whom He chose to spend time with. In short, Jesus was willing to spend time with anyone who opened their door to them.

One story from Matthew stands out as both expressing Jesus being merciful and the Pharisees being unmerciful. In Matt. 9:10-13 we read:

**While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?’ On hearing this, Jesus said, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this mean: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’**

“I desire mercy,” says Jesus.

Jesus is not quick to judge others, even when he recognizes obvious needs for people to turn to God. And so he eats with them.

In first century Palestine, people were often judged as being equal with the people that they ate with.[[1]](#footnote-1) Jesus goes directly against this mindset. While Jesus was completely secure in His identity as the pure and blameless Savior, He did not consider these people as being unworthy to interact with. Rather, Jesus recognized that despite their sinful behaviors, there were many that recognized their need for mercy.

In comparison to Jesus, the Pharisees considered themselves too holy to eat with the people whom Jesus was eating. The Pharisees judged their holiness by how far they stayed away from ‘sinners.’ And so they stayed away. They didn’t want to be defiled. They missed God’s heart of mercy.

Mercy, sisters and brothers, is expected of us as God’s children. Being people of compassion and mercy are ways we display God’s character to the world.

Scripture says “As He is, so are we in this world.” That means, in part, that we are to be people who are merciful.

Now from a natural standpoint, mercy is difficult. Why? Because mercy is costly. Mercy is sacrificial. Mercy cost God his only Son.

In our broken world, there have been and there will be harms done to all of us. How we respond to these harms is very important. We are to be people of mercy and compassion.

All of us could probably name some ways that we have been mistreated. This could be as serious as experiencing abuse in some way or as common as being cut off by another driver.

In every circumstance we have a choice. We can choose to be merciful and forgiving or we can choose to hold on to the offense, to hold on to the wrong done to us or to someone we love. Choosing to not forgive can make us feel powerful, but it actually eats away at us from within.

But if we chose to forgive, if we chose to walk in mercy and compassion, this will be life-giving for us.

I believe that in our strength we are powerless to live lives of mercy. In our own strength we want to reply evil for evil. In our own strength, we will want to follow the motto of the Cobra Kai in responding --- ***Strike hard, strike fast, no mercy.***

But thanks be to God for the power of the gospel. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have the Spirit of Christ within us, enabling us to live lives of mercy.

We are to be people of mercy. As we follow the way of love that Paul describes in chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians, we will be people of mercy. We display mercy in our patience and kindness to others, especially when people’s actions could provoke us to do otherwise.

Mercy is powerful. I think of the powerful story about Amish Grace that came out a decade ago. It is a story based on the 2006 shootings that took place in an Amish School House in Nichol Mine, PA – about 50 miles from here. Charles Carl Roberts murdered five little girls in an incredible tragedy.

But much of the country was shocked when this grieving community expressed their forgiveness towards Charles.

*Friends, this is important. Forgiveness and mercy are not forgetting and it is not pretending that nothing is wrong.*

*Forgiveness and mercy are letting God give you peace and bring healing to your soul.* When we offer mercy and forgiveness, we give our burden to the Lord. He is the ultimate Judge. We choose to not hold things over people, but release them into God’s hands.

Friends, if we are to live out the abundant life that Jesus Christ desires for us, we must be people of mercy.

In the movie Amish Grace, one of the main characters says this towards the close of the film.

**"It is not easy to forgive. The Lord does not set us on an easy path. But faith, when everything is as you want it to be, is not true faith. It is only when our lives are falling apart that we have the chance to make our faith real."**

**\*This is also true when it comes to forgiving ourselves.** Many Christians struggle to forgive themselves for sins past or sins committed as believers. We must remember that if we have embraced Christ’s forgiveness of us, who are we to try to hold ourselves to a higher standard that Christ Himself. So may we practice gentleness and mercy not only towards others, but to ourselves as well. If Christ has set us free, we are free indeed.

So friends, these beatitudes are not the most fun statements or most politically correct statements. But they are life-giving and as we chose to live them out, we can and we will live a blessed life in Jesus Christ.

By the amazing grace of God, you and I have been forgiven so much. And he or she who is aware of how much God has given them, is supernaturally able to be people of mercy and forgiveness as well.

Sources:

Leon Morris – The Gospel According to Matthew p. 10

<https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/20229/amish-grace>

<https://www.pennlive.com/crime/2019/10/remembering-the-west-nickel-mines-amish-school-shooting-in-2006.html>

1. Dr. H. Douglas Buckwalter, “The Gospels and Acts” (lecture, Evangelical Seminary, Harrisburg, PA, September 23, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)