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# The Messenger



*"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15*

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***Dedicated to the Proclamation of the Truth in the Spirit of Love (Ephesians 4:15)***

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**Evangelist and Editor:**

**Dempsey Collins**

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**Listen to PROVE ALL THINGS on 730 AM WKRE, Sunday mornings from 8:15 to 8:30.**

## ***"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7)***

*by Dempsey Collins*

**INTRODUCTION:** The first four beatitudes look toward God, the next three toward men. The first beatitude that looks toward our fellowman is the blessing or favor that comes from being "merciful."

Our Lord attached a great deal of importance to "mercy." Twice Jesus quoted the prophet Hosea in pointing out to the Pharisees that God desires mercy and not sacrifice (Matt. 9:13; 12:7; cp. Hos. 6:6). In Matt. 23:23, He condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for their lack of mercy, "woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin (small aromatic herbs grown in their gardens), and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others."

Many of the Jews were bereft of mercy. They disapproved of Jesus eating with the publicans and sinners (Matt. 9:11) and murmured against Jesus' disciples for doing the same (Luke 5:30). The Roman world was also merciless, especially toward slaves, children and any less fortunate than themselves. Many slaves were treated as chattel property or living tools to be used and destroyed when worn out. A master could, and sometimes did, kill his slave for the slightest provocation. Unwanted children were abandoned in the streets, thrown out like refuse. It was in this kind of backdrop Jesus taught mercy.

### **I. WHO ARE THE MERCIFUL?**

- A. Definition of terms: Merciful is from *eleemo*; *eleos* "merciful, pitiful, compassionate (Moulton pg. 131). "... good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them" (Thayer pg. 203). "... not simply possessed of pity but actively compassionate" (Vine pg. 62). "To be merciful is to have the same attitude to men as God has (Luke 6:36), to think of men as God thinks of men, to feel for men as God feels for them, to act towards men as God acts towards them." (Wm. Barclay pgs. 99-100). To have compassion for someone is to say, "I feel what you feel." Hence, we sympathize with them. Mercy is the opposite of self-centeredness and selfishness.

1. In the general sense the word is used to indicate active compassion for the unfortunate.
2. An extension of the meaning of mercy is its use to denote the sparing of punishment for one who justly deserves it (I Peter 2:9, 10).
3. The Lord's use of "merciful" encompasses both the general and the extended use of the word, i.e., happy are those who show compassion on the suffering and those who forgive those who trespass against them. (Jimmy Tuten – Notes on the Beatitudes)

II. HOW CAN WE BE MERCIFUL? We must keep in mind that mercy is first an attitude of compassion. "I feel what you feel" and second, action or active good will that results from compassion. The Samaritan of the Lord's parable "had compassion on" the injured traveler, but this would not have helped the man. Only when the compassionate Samaritan "showed mercy on him" was he relieved of his needs (Luke 10:25-37). More than pity was expected in the following examples: (Matt. 18:15; Luke 18:13; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30; note esp. Matt. 9:35-38).

- A. By helping others whenever they are in need (Luke 10:30-37; James 2:14-17; Matt. 25:34-40; I Cor. 16:1-3; Rom. 15:25, 26; II Cor. 8, 9).
- B. By forgiving those who wrong us (Matt. 18:23-27; Eph. 4:32). Such forgiveness harbors no malice. The word forgiveness, *Aphiemi*, "... first signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct, the deliverance of the sinner from the penalty divinely, and therefore righteously, imposed; secondly, it involves the complete removal of the cause of offence." (Vine pg. 122) Human forgiveness is to be strictly analogous to Divine forgiveness (Luke 6:36; Matt. 6:12; Isa. 1:18; 43:25; Jer. 31:34). The conditions are repentance and confession (Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:3). Forgiveness takes care of past sins, future sins must also be repented of to be forgiven. To not be forgiving is as much to say, "I do not want the forgiveness of God."
- C. By showing kindness of judgment. (Slow to condemn, not judge according to appearance (Matt. 7:1-5; John 7:24), eager to believe the best about people (I Cor. 13:7), unlike Satan who is quick to accuse (Rev. 12:10, see also Luke 6:36-38).

### III. "FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY"

Before we can have mercy we must be merciful is a thread of truth that runs throughout the New Testament. James said, "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13). Jesus finishes the story of the unforgiving debtor with the warning, "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart" (Matt. 18:35). In the model prayer given to the apostles, Jesus said, "forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors ... For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matt. 6:12, 14, 15). A failure to grant mercy to others also reveals a failure to understand and appreciate, and for that matter, even remember the mercy we have received from God. Note the debts in Matt. 18:21-35, millions of dollars in comparison to a few. Let us therefore, show mercy that we may receive God's rich mercy (Eph. 2:4) by which we are saved (Titus 3:5) and through which we have hope (I Pet. 1:3).

### IV. HOW TO DEVELOP AN ATTITUDE OF MERCY:

- A. Realize how much our heavenly Father has been merciful to us (John 3:16; Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5; Matt. 18:24).
- B. Recognize our need for mercy (Matt. 18:35; 6:12, 14, 15).
- C. Have compassion, feel the feelings of others (Luke 10:33).

CONCLUSION: In no action do we more accurately imitate our merciful Father (Luke 6:36). When we demonstrate mercy we show that we are becoming "partakers of the divine nature" and will be fit companions for God in eternity.