



KICK OFF

Who are the most intolerant people in our community?



KEY VERSE

Matthew 5:7 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.'



BIG IDEA

The Christian is merciful towards the wretched because they recognise themselves to be wretched, in being merciful they are to show mercy.



INVESTIGATE

THE MERCIFUL

- Up until this point in the Beatitudes Jesus has been giving us a series of searching tests as to whether we recognize our need. Now He is concerned about our disposition and attitude, who we are as people? Can you see this flow in the beatitudes to this point? Explain.

- What do we learn about mercy from the following:
The example in the Parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10: 25—37

John the Baptist's father who thanked God for mercy: Luke 1: 72, 78

Jesus: Matthew 9: 9—13, 18: 21—35

- How do the first four beatitudes, when lived out in our experience result in a merciful Christian character?



DIG DEEPER

John Stott (p 47) says "Mercy" is compassion for people in need.

Richard Lenski helpfully distinguishes it from 'grace': 'The noun "mercy" always deals with what we see of pain, misery and distress, the results of sin; and grace always deals with the sin and guilt itself. The one extends relief, the other pardon; the one cures, heals, helps, the other cleanses and restates.'

Jesus does not specify the categories of people he has in mind to whom his disciples are to show mercy. He gives no indication whether he is thinking primarily of those overcome by disaster, like the traveler from Jerusalem to Jericho whom robbers assaulted and to whom the good Samaritan 'showed mercy', or of the hungry, the sick and the outcast on whom he himself regularly took pity, or of those who wrong us so that justice cries out for punishment but mercy for forgiveness. There was no need for Jesus to elaborate. Our God is a merciful God and shows mercy continuously; the citizens of his kingdom must show mercy too.

Of course, the world is unmerciful, as indeed also the church in its worldliness has often been. The world prefers to insulate itself against the pains and calamities of men. It finds revenge delicious, and forgiveness, by comparison, tame. But those who show mercy find it.

The same truth is echoed in the Lord's Prayer cont'd.next page

4. Is it possible to earn mercy?

5. Who will receive the mercy Jesus brings?

When it says, 'and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.' This is not because we can merit mercy by mercy for forgiveness, but because we cannot receive the mercy and forgiveness of God unless we repent, and we cannot claim to have repented of our sins if we are unmerciful towards the sins of others. Nothing proves more clearly that we have been forgiven than our own readiness to forgive. To forgive and to be forgiven, to show mercy and to receive mercy: these belong indissolubly together, as Jesus illustrated in his parable of the unmerciful servant. Matthew 18:21-35 Stott p47—48



THINK AND APPLY

6. In what ways can you be more merciful?

7. How might this attitude be worked out in our congregation?



8. How should we deal with resentful feelings towards others?

PRAISE GOD that He is a merciful God who shows His mercy continuously.

CONFESS our hard heartedness towards people.

ASK GOD for opportunities to show compassion and mercy.

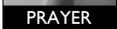
PRAY ALSO

For our witness in the city, especially amongst the poor and the homeless.

Pray for the ministry of the Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission—the team led by Phil Court at Flemington.



Praise God for the challenges raised by God's Word through this study.



Praying for others in your group:



How does this passage apply to our daily life?



For next week's study read Matthew 5:8