

AUGUST 1, 2021 | STUDY GUIDE |



CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

THE BEATITUDES

PART 6

"BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY WILL
BE SHOWN MERCY."

- MATTHEW 5:7



CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

I. The "Blessing" of the Beatitudes

The word, *blessed*, translated from the Greek word, *makarios*, means, fundamentally, to find approval from God. It is wonderful news that is far better than just *being happy*. In the words of scholar N.T. Wright, Jesus here is "not offering up a list of what sort of people God normally blesses...this is the gospel, good news, not good advice."

"The Beatitudes, in particular, are not teachings on how to be blessed. They are not instructions on how to do anything. They do not indicate conditions that are especially pleasing to God or good for human beings.

No one is actually being told that they are better off for being poor, for mourning, for being persecuted, and so on, or that the conditions listed are recommended ways to well-being before God or man. Nor are the Beatitudes indications of who will be on top 'after the revolution.' They are explanations and illustrations, drawn from the immediate setting, of the present availability of the kingdom through personal relationship to Jesus. They single out cases that provide proof that, in him, the rule of God from the heavens truly is available in life circumstances that are beyond all human hope."

- Dallas Willard

Mercy is going to spring out of me as I fix my eyes upon Jesus, looking into the perfect law that brings freedom, rivers of living water flowing out of my heart. Jesus says to us in John 15:5, “I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing.”

The more connected I am to Jesus, mercy naturally becomes part of my DNA.

II. What is "Mercy"?

“Mercy: compassionate treatment, having a capacity to forgive, or showing kindness. I also read that it is described as the virtue of forgiveness. It is the decision to stop hating and to renounce vengeance.

“When Christ died to remove our condemnation, he opened, as it were, the valve of heaven’s mighty mercy to flow on behalf of our liberation from the power of sin.”
- John Piper

Mercy is one of God’s attributes. God is merciful!

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness.”
(Lamentations 3:22)

“Mercy is a generous attitude which is willing to see things from the other’s point of view and is not quick to take offence or to gloat over others’ shortcomings. Mercy sets aside society’s assumption that it is honourable to demand revenge.”
- R.T. France

In the case of being merciful, extending mercy to others is actually an outpouring of the Holy Spirit at work in the mundane moments of our days, and opportunities to do so will be magnified and recognized as we seek and experience union with God.

“God orchestrates things in our lives for our betterment.”
- Harry Bicknell



III. On Becoming the Merciful

This verse *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy,”* is not some formula or recipe for receiving mercy. We can’t just try hard to be more merciful. This is not a token economy where dispensing mercy means more mercy coming our way.

“The person who has recognized his own helplessness and wretchedness is grateful for whatever mercy is shown him; and he learns to be merciful toward others.”

– D.A. Carson

What a wonderful world it would be if we all joined wholeheartedly into the mercy cycle, thanking God for the mercy we receive, dispensing mercy to those in our domain, and seeing that mercy reciprocated both towards us and from the recipient to their own sphere of influence. Bearing fruit such as this is only possible when we stay intimately connected to Jesus. Jesus says, *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you.”* (John 15:4)

How is God’s mercy being reflected in your own life?

If you are looking at mercy through the lens of your work, what sorts of opportunities would there be for you to be merciful to your colleagues, your employees or your customers?

What would mercy look like in your family dynamics? Could it mean a willingness to make the first move in restoring a broken relationship with a parent or sibling, even if you were the one who was hurt? Or might you as a parent take steps to be more patient and understanding with your children when they make mistakes or don’t live up to your expectations of them?

How would mercy play out in other areas of your life? What would mercy look like for you as a landlord? How about as a teacher with a challenging student? Or, as an adult child, thinking about how you can best support your aging parents, financially or otherwise? As a friend, are you willing to forgive slights and reach out to that person who has wronged you in the past?



Life Group Discussion and Reflection

1. Consider a time when you were 'shown mercy'. What was it like? How did it influence how you approached opportunities to show mercy later?

2. **Read Matthew 5:1-12.** In this series we have seen how the Beatitudes are not a "to do" list of commands, but the "norms of the kingdom" – a striking picture of how God's kingdom breaks open a whole new way of being. Why do you think this matters in the case of Jesus' words about mercy?

3. Read the definition of the Greek word for "mercy" from scholar R.T. France and discuss it as a group: "Mercy is a generous attitude which is willing to see things from the other's point of view and is not quick to take offence or to gloat over others' shortcomings. Mercy sets aside society's assumption that it is honourable to demand revenge." How might this word of Jesus be a challenge to your assumptions?

4. In his message, Anthony reminded us that this is not a 'transaction' that Jesus is teaching – "If you are merciful, maybe you'll experience mercy too" – but rather the outworking of the Holy Spirit in those who have experienced God's mercy. That does not mean, however, that being merciful is not a quality that will grow in us. How might this quality grow in you?

Prayer: Take some time to share prayer requests with your group. Pray for each other in response to your answers to questions 4, 5 and 6 above, that each person would take the steps they spoke of this upcoming week.