

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 19 Sep 2021

Sermon Title : Merciful

Speaker : Rev Peter Koh

Text : Matthew 5:7

INTRODUCTION

It is man's sinful nature to want vengeance. The Old Testament states the principle - an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth – that is, the punishment should match the crime. However this is in the context of a court case before a civil authority. It is not God's intent to advocate personal vengeance. Today's Bible passage will help us understand what mercy is all about.

Recap of the first 4 Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-6)

- ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- ⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- ⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

The first 3 Beatitudes are about emptying of self. The 4th Beatitude is about filling up with God's Word and His presence. The first 4 Beatitudes are about faith or attitude (the 'being') while the 5th Beatitude is about putting faith into action (the 'doing'):

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy (Matthew 5:7)

What is mercy?

Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown to someone when it is within one's power to punish or harm.

What mercy is not:

Mercy is not

1. Justice: Receiving what you deserve
2. Grace: Receiving what you do not deserve. Christ died to give us salvation – God showed us grace in giving us salvation when we did not deserve it.

Mercy is: Not receiving what you deserve

We deserve to die on the cross. However, because of God's mercy, we are spared from being hung on the cross for all the sins we have committed.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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Who are the merciful

- One who shows it to those who are weaker and poorer.
- One who looks for those who weep and mourn.
- One who is forgiving to others and always looking to restore broken relationships.
- One who is merciful to the character of other people and chooses to think the best of them whenever possible.
- One who will not expect too much from others.
- One who is compassionate to those who are outwardly sinful.
- One who cares for the souls of all men.

A. Blessed are the merciful

It speaks to those who have already received mercy. We have received God's mercy and thus can show mercy to others:

- It is mercy to be emptied of pride and becoming poor in spirit. We need to understand our spiritual bankruptcy – that we cannot live without God.
- It is mercy to be brought to mourning over our spiritual condition. We often fail God and do not mourn enough. We are not perfect but a work in progress.
- It is mercy to receive the grace of meekness and to become gentle.
- It is mercy to be made hungry and thirsty after righteousness. We need to yearn for God and to understand His heartbeat. When we do this, it is much easier for us to show mercy to others.

B. For they shall receive mercy

If you want mercy from others - especially from God, then you should take care to be merciful to others. One example is king David:

- Saul threw a spear at David while David was playing the harp for him because Saul was insecure about David's popularity.
- God showed David mercy because David was notably merciful to king Saul and on several occasions was kind to a very unworthy Saul. David had opportunities to kill Saul e.g. when he was in a cave with Saul alone – but David refrained from doing so.
- In David, the merciful obtained mercy.

Challenges

What makes being merciful difficult?

1. Because what they have done to me deserves punishment.
 - When someone wrongs us, a natural instinct is to fight back, not to turn the other cheek.
2. They have hurt me, and I want to see them hurt.
 - Many Chinese martial arts films focus on the theme of revenge. Sometimes, the desire for vengeance is even passed on from one generation to the next.

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Forgiveness

The main cause of not being able to show mercy is unforgiveness. Many Christians struggle with unforgiveness. We pray every Sunday for God to forgive our trespasses just as we forgive those who trespass against us but we do not act on it. We have not appropriated it into our spirits/souls.

In fact, forgiveness is a command from God, not a request:

“but if you do not forgive others their trespasses,
neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:15)

“bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Colossians 3:13)

If we continue to harbour unforgiveness in our hearts, we cannot be merciful. We often misunderstand forgiveness to mean that the offender gets away scot-free if we do not take action. If we understand what forgiveness is about, we will find it much easier to forgive others and show mercy:

- Forgiveness benefits the offended, not the offender.
- Forgiveness is when we tell God our unhappiness and let God take vengeance on our behalf. The offender will suffer the consequences of his actions.
- God then restores us by not allowing us to carry the anger in our hearts, enabling us to move on with our lives.

When someone offends us and we keep harbouring unforgiveness, anger and resentment in our hearts, this may affect our appetite, sleep, overall health and even relationships with our loved ones.

God is our greatest example of one who has shown mercy.

CONCLUSION

Just as we have received God's mercy, may we learn to extend mercy and forgiveness even to those who have wronged us. In so doing, God has promised his blessing of restoration and an abundant life.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Matthew 5:7 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, 'This is the Word of the Lord.'

All to respond, "Thanks be to God." Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now."

- a. As God's word was read, how has this verse spoken to you?

- b. (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon "Merciful"?

- (ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. In what ways is showing mercy different from seeking justice?
 - (i) What are some circumstances you would exercise mercy instead of justice even when you have the right to claim justice?
 - (ii) What are some circumstances you would not exercise mercy instead of justice?
- 2b. How does practising the first 4 Beatitudes (being poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness) help you in exercising mercy?
- 2c.
 - (i) In what ways have you received mercy from God?
 - (ii) What does this tell you about God?
- 3a. Do you find it difficult to forgive those who have wronged or offended you by showing mercy? How has knowing what forgiveness is about (page 3 above) impacted you?
- 3b. Who is one person you need to show mercy to? What is one thing you can do this week to show mercy to this person?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3b and 3c above so that you can experience God's blessings of mercy and restoration, for the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony of how God enabled you to show His mercy and forgiveness to someone who has wronged or offended you.

OR

Give thanks to God for His promised blessings when you are merciful to others.

5. With a prayer partner, take time to pray for the concerns in 3b and 3c above, asking for the Holy Spirit's enablement to let go of past wrongs and offences against you so you can show mercy to those who have wronged you. Pray also for every group member who is currently struggling with unforgiveness.

As a group, take time to pray for a fresh revelation of God's mercy and grace so everyone may seek to be merciful as you have received mercy, and be blessed.

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