**Sermon on the Mount, Session 5**

**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.**

**1a) Introduction**

The first four Beatitudes are about the internal attitudes that will draw us closer to God; Being Poor in spirit. Mourning. Being Meek and Hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

When you have more of God in your life through nurturing the right internal attitudes, there will be an external outflow that will touch those around. The next three beatitudes cover the external outflow that comes from being right with God; Showing mercy, Living a holy life and being a peacemaker.

The last beatitude tells how others will respond when you live that life. You will be persecuted.

**2) What does it mean to be merciful?**

a) What does it mean to be “merciful”?

b) The Message translation puts it like this; “You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for”. (Matt. 5, 7).

c) Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus unpacks some of the beatitudes and gives us some practical illustrations of how we should work them out in our daily lives. The verses that amplify what he meant by being merciful say; “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6, 38). (Luke 6, 38).

**3) What does the word “Mercy” mean?**

a) The word Mercy is a greek word ἐλεήμονες (Eleemones) which comes from the very ἐλεέω (eleéō) which has two meanings. The first meaning is “To be Compassionate towards”. It describes a love that reaches out and does something to help.

b) In the Old Testament the word for this is וָחֶ֣סֶד or Checed (Pronounced Kheh-sed). As well as being translated “Mercy” (149 times in KJV), it is also frequently translated (40 times) “Loving-kindness”. It’s more than love. It’s more than kindness. It talks about a love that reaches out in acts of kindness. Eg. “Surely goodness and “Loving-kindness”will follow me all the days of my life” (Ps. 23, 6).

**4) Loving-kindness – a part of who you are**

a) Mercy or Lovingkindness is one of the most central parts of God’s character. God is always reaching out towards us in love and looking for ways to shower us with his kindness.

b) **“Loving-kindness”** is even one of God’s names! When God revealed his name to Moses on Mount Sinai he said; “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in **loving-kindness** and faithfulness... ” (Exod. 34, 6)

c) Loving-kindness is not something you do. It’s something you are. From God’s heart there is a constant flow of goodness, kindness and love pouring out towards us.

d) In the story of the woman with the flow of blood who touched Jesus’ garment, “virtue” (KJV) or loving-kindness flowed out of Jesus into the woman just as he passed by.

**5) Why doesn’t Loving-Kindness always flow out of our lives?**

a) Although we have the live of God within us, as we walk down the streets, there is often no loving-kindness flowing out of our lives.

b) Jesus talks about this in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10, 25-37). In the story Jesus chooses 3 characters to walk down that road. Two of these were in full time ministry in the temple in Jerusalem. They could even have been on their way to the temple to fulfil their ministry.

c) Why didn’t the priest or the levite stop? Probably not because they were bad people. Why don’t we sometimes stop and help those that we know are in need when we have the possibility to do so, for example when we see an advert for orphans in Africa?

d) We don’t stop because at that moment, there’s no outflow of loving-kindness. That’s because our minds are too focussed on our own needs, agendas, fears or desires for there to be an outward flow toward others.

e) Instead of being filled with “Loving-kindness”, our minds can be filled with fear, stress, pain or pleasure. When our minds and hearts are filled with those attitudes, there is no outflow to those in need around us.

**6) What is the opposite of mercy?**

a) Sometimes we can learn what a word means by looking at its opposite. The dictionary says this; “Disapproval, inhumanity, intolerance, selfishness, unkindness”.

b) Jesus gives an alternative opposite to Mercy. “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Hosea 6, 6). For believers, one of the things that is the most likely to get in the way of us showing mercy is our religious practice.

c) Hosea 6, 6 is one of the few OT scriptures that Jesus quoted on at least 2 separate occasions. One time was when Jesus was walking through ripe corn fields and his disciples picked a few ears of corn to eat on the Sabbath ( Matt. 12, 7) and the Pharisees condemned them for going against the scriptures by working on the sabbath. For the Jews of Jesus’ day, keeping the letter of the Biblical law and offering their sacrifices at the temple were the most important things that they could do.

Jesus said to them; “I desire mercy, not sacrifice”. In other words whilst it’s important to strive to obey God’s word and to go to church meetings, it’s more important to love people.

d) The other time Jesus quoted this verse was when he sat down to eat with many tax collectors and prostitutes and the Pharisees asked him why he did eat with sinners (Matt. 9, 13). Those value the teachings of the scripture can easily start to condemn those who we think are out of line. When Jesus said; “I desire Mercy, not Sacrifice”, he meant that our love for God’s word shouldn’t stop us loving those who live contrary to God’s word.

**7) Jesus “bends” his own rules**

a) There are many instances in the gospels where Jesus forgives someone whom the OT law which he wrote says that they should be put to death! For example the woman caught in the act of committing adultery (John 8)

b) The story’s told of St. Peter guarding the gates of heaven. He’s got his clipboard on which is written the names of all those who have given their lives to Jesus and been forgiven of their sins. There’s a line of people waiting in front of him and as they announce their name, he looks at his list to see if they are allowed in or not.

As he goes on, he notices this shadowy figure with a hood going up to one of those who he has rejected, and he takes him by the hand and jumps with him over the high surrounding wall into heaven.

It happens two or three more times and Peter starts getting disturbed. I’m meant to be guarding the gates of heaven here. I’ve got the list. And someone is breaking the rules. I’ll go and see who it is and stop them.” The shadowy figure comes comes back again, and so Peter goes up to confront him. “Hey. Who do you think you are, letting people into heaven people whose names are not on the list?” The figure pulls back his hood and Peter sees it’s Jesus. So he’s very confused. But master, you gave me the list. You wrote the list of all those who have given their lives to you. I’m doing my best to do everything by the book and you just ignore the rules that you made. How can you let this man into heaven when he hasn’t even given his life to you?”

Jesus smiles and he says; “Peter, you don’t know him like I do. He’ a special case. Me and him we have a special thing going. He talks to me every night and does his best to do the things that I want even though he’s never read the Bible. He’s never had a chance to hear about who I am or what I’ve done. He’s never been to a living church or met anyone who’s given their life to me. But He’s seen me from afar and he loves me and seeks after me even though he doesn’t know who I am. And I watch him and love him. And now we’re going to be together”.

“I desire Mercy. Not sacrifice.”

**8) Mercy means to love to those who don’t deserve it**

a) The second meaning of Mercy emphasises the point that we show kindness to those who don’t deserve it.

8b) Expanding on the beatitudes later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said; “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matt. 5, 44)

It’s not easy to love your enemies, is it.

8c) We should never allow the bad in others to bring out bad in ourselves.

8d) Corrie Ten Boom when speaking in a church in Germany was confronted by one of the former guards from her concentration camp in Ravensbrook who asked for forgiveness. Though it was a struggle, she forgive him.

8e) At the end of the second world war, a US Army chaplain called Major Henry Gerecke was assigned to the spiritual care of the 15 top Nazi leaders during three 9 month long Nuremberg trials. Gerecke was reluctant to take on his role as two of his sons were badly injured in World War 2 and he had to fight a revulsion for the perpetrators of such barbaric war crimes. Eventually he accepted it as a special calling to preach the limitless grace of God to the worst sinners of his generation.

He would go and visit the men one by one in their cells and talk and pray with them and invite them to chapel services. All but one of those 15 men were hanged for their crimes. 13 of the 15 received Christ and became changed men in the days before their executions, including the Nazi foreign minister von Ribbentrop, the Nazi leaders of occupied Czechoslovakia and Poland, the chief of the Nazi army and of the Navy and even the chief of slave labour, who was the first of the Nazi leaders to be saved.

f) If God can forgive the sins of people like that and give them a clean start, so should we.