

Blessed!

A Study on the *Beatitudes* of Jesus

As of 3/22/20

Part 6 The Exposition of Matthew 5:4- continued

Matthew 5:1-12

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

2 He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

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 gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Blessedness of the Merciful

Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Now the first four Beatitudes deal entirely with "*inner* Principles"- which are Principles of the heart and mind. They are concerned with the way we see ourselves before God. But the last four are actually outward manifestations of those very same Attitudes. For example, those who, in "poverty of spirit", recognize their need for God's Mercy respond to that- by showing Mercy to others. Those who mourn over their own Sin- respond by a Purity of heart (v. 8). Those who have been gifted with spiritual Meekness- respond by seeking to make Peace (v. 9). And those who hunger and thirst for Righteousness respond by not avoiding the price of that Righteousness- which is being persecuted for Righteousness' sake (v. 10).

The concept of Mercy is all throughout Scripture, from the Fall to the consummation of History at the Return of Christ. Mercy is a desperately needed

Gift of God's providential and redemptive Work on behalf of sinners. And so, the Lord *requires* that His people to follow His Example by extending Mercy to others- *especially* those who have done nothing to deserve it. So, to discover the essence of Mercy- we will look at three basic aspects:

1. The Meaning of Mercy
2. The Source of Mercy
3. The Practice of Mercy

The Meaning of Mercy

Now for the most part, the days in which Jesus lived and taught were *not* characterized by Mercy. Those days were very harsh, cruel, violent, barbaric, and patently *unmerciful*. The Jewish religionists themselves were not inclined to show Mercy to anyone- because to those who are proud, self-righteous, and judgmental- Mercy is always seen as a weakness and a compromise with Evil.

Also, to many of Jesus' hearers- showing Mercy was considered one of the least of virtues, if it was thought to be a virtue at all. It was in the same category as Love- reserved only for those who had shown that same virtue to you. So, to a Pharisee, you only loved those who loved you. And you only showed Mercy to those who had already showed Mercy to you. That Attitude was specifically condemned by Jesus later in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, '*YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR* and hate your enemy.'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Yet many people have interpreted this Beatitude in another way that is just as selfish and just as humanistic. These people maintain that our being merciful causes those around us- *especially* those to whom we show mercy- to then be merciful to us. So, in their mind- Mercy given will mean Mercy received. For such people, Mercy is shown to others *ONLY* in an effort toward self-seeking.

The ancient rabbi Gamaliel is quoted in the Talmud as saying,

"Whenever thou hast mercy, God will have mercy upon thee, and if thou hast not mercy, neither will God have mercy on thee."

Gamaliel's idea was correct. When God is involved there will be Mercy for Mercy.

Matthew 6:14&15

14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

But as a platitude applied among other people- the Principle does not work. One writer sentimentally says,

"This is the great truth of life: if people see us care, they will care."

... yet neither Scripture nor experience bears out that idea. God works that way, but the world does not. With God there is *always* proper reciprocation, and with interest. If we honor God, He will honor us; if we show Mercy to others, especially to His children, God will show even more abundant Mercy to us. But why is that?

It is because the only reason we show Mercy- is because God has already enabled and empowered us to do so. So, we are NOT earning Mercy by giving Mercy. No. We are giving Mercy because God has graciously empowered us to do so and God is actually NOT reciprocating to us at all. God is freely being merciful to us- simply because He chooses to.

Romans 9:15&16

15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

16 So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

The English word, "Mercy" comes from the Hebrew word, *hesed* and the Greek word, *eleos*, and it means: *steadfast love; lovingkindness; underserved kindness; or compassion*. The Bible teaches *repeatedly* that the one true living God is not only Almighty and Omipotent- but is also, by Nature, Merciful. The God of the Bible is Kind; Good; and Compassionate.

One of the strangest things about God's Mercy is that- even though it is one of the most *precious* Qualities about God- it is also one of the most *misunderstood* and *misappropriated*. And once Mercy is understood from a Biblical perspective- from God's Perspective- it is often looked at with great disdain and in many quarters- is even *rejected*.

Mercy Isn't "Fair"

The very first thing that we need to understand about Mercy- is that it is *always* "underserved". Nobody *deserves* Mercy. Nobody has *earned* it; or *qualifies*

for God's Mercy. And no human, born of woman, is *entitled* to receive Mercy. And so, by definition, Mercy is never, at any time, distributed "equally" among all people. And even among those to whom Mercy is distributed- it isn't always distributed to the same *extent*. Mercy is always "free" and God is never *obligated* to show anyone His Mercy. And that has the net effect of making Mercy very precious indeed. And it should also make us all very grateful and thankful when God does show us His Mercy.

If Mercy was *deserved* and was always distributed *equally* among *all* people- it would make Mercy to be a *Payment*- rather than a Gift. It would make Mercy something that God *owed* to us- and not something that He graciously *gives* to us. It would make Mercy something that God is *obligated* to give- and not something that He wondrously provides.

So, by definition, Mercy is not "Fair". Now by saying that- I do NOT mean that God is "Unfair". He isn't. What I mean by that- is that God is not interested in having to measure up to some arbitrary human standard of "Fairness". God is interested in being Almighty God- Who does all things...

... after the counsel of His will, (Ephesians 1:11b)

"Fairness" would dictate that God gives *nobody* His Mercy- since we are all undeserving wicked sinners. Yet God DOES give His Mercy. In fact, God grants Mercy way beyond our comprehension. But He always grants that Mercy based solely on His Own Choice- and nothing else.

We must understand that God is the only truly "free" Being in the Universe. He does what He does- based on nothing but His Own Good Pleasure.

Psalms 115:3

But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

So, the criteria by which God acts and moves and does *anything*- is whether it will bring Himself Glory; whether it will magnify His Own pristine Holiness. And God's Mercy is no exception to this. Therefore, Mercy is *always*, and in *all cases*, distributed according to God's Will; God's Prerogative; God's Plan; God's Choice; and God's Desire without *any* consideration of Man's condition, will, need, or desire. The Bible does NOT teach that people receive Mercy from God simply because they *ask* for it; or even because they *need* it. No, the Bible teaches that God sovereignly chooses to "grant" or "give" His Mercy to them. Thus, it is true that everybody who *needs* Mercy- does *not* receive it.

Romans 9:14-21

14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

16 So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "***FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.***"

18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

Mercy is not "Leniency"

Now as we define God's Mercy- we must be clear that Mercy is *not* Leniency. Leniency is defined as:

The act of appeasing; the act of agreeable tolerance; being permissive; indulgent; or alleviating.¹

Leniency is a *weakness* of character- not a strength. It is a character *defect* and is birthed in an *inability* or *unwillingness* to confront and/or stop something that is wrong. But the God of Scripture is not weak; neither is His Character defective in any way. God's Character is Perfect and is the one single Standard of Righteousness. It is God's Justice that assures that *everything* that is wrong will be corrected. And that fact makes God's Mercy to *never* be Leniency.

But the one thing that becomes crystal clear from studying the Scriptures is the great distinction between the God of the Bible- the one true and living God; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the Creator Redeemer God; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ- and all the other man-made "deities" of the false religions and human philosophies of the earth. *None* of these false "deities" are compassionate; *none* of them are loving; *none* of them are gracious; *none* of them are forgiving; *none* of them are kind; and *none* of them are merciful.

There aren't any "savior-gods" in the other religions of Man. There are not any "gods" of love, or tenderness or compassion or mercy in the demonically inspired religions of sinful men. Therefore, in all other religions- Man must "do" for God. Only in Christianity does God "do" for Man.

So, don't pick Islam if you want a merciful God- because you will never find a "god" like that anywhere in the *Qu-ran*. Don't search for a merciful God in the *Bhagavad- gita*; or the teachings of Confucius; or the writings of the American Indians; or the writings of the Buddha because you will never find Him there.

The concept that the Omnipotent, Omniscient God and Creator of the Universe is also Loving, Kind, Compassionate, Good, and Merciful- is *unique* to the

¹ Dictionary.com

God of the Bible. The “gods” of the false religions of the nations are distasteful, unhappy “deities”- who can *never* be appeased; are *never* satisfied; and will *never*, in a million years, issue Mercy to *anyone*. But it is the very Nature of the one true and living God to feel real Compassion and to have genuine Love and Mercy on us.

How Do “Mercy” and “Justice” Relate?

We need to understand that as human beings who are sinful- we elevate Mercy far above God’s Justice- precisely because we are guilty. But from God’s Perspective- His Justice and His Mercy are *always* kept at a perfect Balance. God is *never* more Merciful than He is Just; and He is *never* more Just than He is Merciful.

And that reality, creates a terrible problem- that most people haven’t really considered. Because God’s Attribute of Mercy seems to clash with the Attribute of His Justice. And so, normally speaking, God is *either* Just *or* Merciful- but He simply CANNOT be *both* Just and Merciful at the same time to the same person.

Exodus 34:6&7a

6 Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin...

Here Moses was “carried along” by God the Holy Spirit to teach that God is...

- Compassionate
- Gracious
- Slow to Anger (Longsuffering)
- Abounding in Lovingkindness (Mercy)
- Abounding in Truth
- Who Keeps Lovingkindness (Mercy) for thousands
- Who Forgives Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin

... and we rejoice over a God like that! He is full of Mercy! But now look what Moses said next:

Exodus 34:7b

... yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

... look again at the phrase,

... yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished

... this means that ALL sinners MUST be punished. Not a single person, who commits sins, can go unpunished. But wait! Look what the Apostle Paul said:

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Here, the Apostle wrote infallibly that ALL have sinned. But if ALL have sinned- then ALL are guilty. And if ALL are guilty- then ALL must be punished! Because the Bible says that God **will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished.**

But if ALL guilty sinners are punished- how does God show anyone His Mercy? This problem is what is called, "*The Great Theological Conundrum*". It is a Theological issue which no other religion- other than Biblical Christianity- can solve. All other religions fail in their effort to allow God to be both Merciful and Just at the same time to the same person. And the Problem is displayed something like this:

If God is Just- then He must judge all Sin. And God judges all Sin by damning it and the sinner alike. But when God shows Mercy to someone- He pardons them. So, if God damns all Sin- on what basis then can God show Mercy to anyone- since everyone is a guilty sinner? If God allows even one Sin to go unpunished by forgiving the Sin and pardoning the sinner - then Justice was NOT served. And since Justice was not served- God ceases to be Just (Righteous). Yet if God judges all Sin and damns all sinners- He ceases to be Merciful.

God's Glory and Our Sin

You see, because God is perfectly Righteous- every unrighteous thought or intent of the heart or action by people- offends and insults God. And that is why Sin is wrong. Sin *belittles* and *dishonors* God's Glory.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

God's Glory is the *summation* of all of God's Qualities and Characteristics and Attributes. So, God's Glory is what makes God to be- God. In other words, God's Glory is Who God is. And the Bible teaches that God loves His Own Glory more than anything else. *Everything* God does- *including* Creation and Salvation- He does for one of three reasons:

1. For My Glory
2. For My Name's Sake
3. So they will know there is none like Me in all the earth.

Now *why* did Paul connect our Sin with God's Glory? Because Sin *attacks* God's Glory. The phrase, "**fall short**" that Paul used here- does NOT mean that we almost hit the mark but fell just short of it. No, this phrase has to do with trampling something under foot- with disgust. So, Paul teaches here that our Sin- every Sin- tramples God's Glory under our feet with total disgust. How?

When we sin- we are telling God that we -prefer our Sin over Him. We are saying that sinning brings us more Joy and more Happiness than obeying Him. Yet God is the most glorious and the most beautiful and the most important Being in the Universe. And everything God expects from us- is right and correct. So, to prefer something that has been made; or something that is passing away- over and above the immortal God- *insults* and *belittles* God's Glory more than anything else.

What Sin Is

It is as though God is standing before us- in all His Pristine Magnificence and Brilliance- offering us Himself- and yet we tell Him, "*No thank You- I would rather have something else besides You. I don't see You as the Treasure of the Universe and loving and obeying You- doesn't make me happy. So, I would rather ignore You and live my life according to the dictates of my own heart- rather than submit myself to You and Your Ways.*" That is what Sin is. And so, *whatever* we love; desire; or want more than God- is Sin- because it *rejects* God. And you simply cannot insult God any more than rejecting Him.

So, when God's Glory is attacked; belittled; or insulted- God's Righteousness demands that this Sin be adjudicated. And so, God releases His Wrath and Judgment. Now the Bible teaches that "God is Love". (**1John 4:8&16**) Yet the Bible does not say, "God is Wrath." So, from where does God's Wrath come? Wrath and Damnation are the vehicles by which God's Righteousness (His Justness) defends and adjudicates the offense against God's Glory (our Sin). And so, when God's Wrath is poured out against unrepentant sinners- we say, "*God has judged.*"

Now the Bible is clear- God is infinitely Merciful. But the Bible also teaches that God is also infinitely Just (Righteous). And God's Justice will never tolerate an offense against His Own Glory. So, while God issues Mercy to thousands- freely- God's Righteousness *judges* all Sin and all unrepentant sinners through His Wrath and Judgment.

"The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations

Now the Punishment must always fit the Crime. And an insult to God's Glory is the *highest* Evil that can be perpetrated. And so, the Punishment against that Crime- is Death- *eternal* Death- which we call Hell. So, God's judgment against Sin- is Damnation. Now that shocks the sensibilities of people, who have not read the Bible very much. But if God did not damn all Sin- then He would be agreeing with the unrepentant sinner- that His Glory was not worth defending.

The Problem is Solved in Jesus

No other religion other than Biblical Christianity can solve this “*Theological Conundrum*” because no other religion has the “*Incarnation*”. When God became a Man; when God left His Throne in Glory and took on human flesh- He lived a perfectly sinless Life. Jesus obeyed God’s Law- *perfectly and continuously* in thought, word, and deed- every second of every day for 33-1/2 years. And by doing this- Jesus *fulfilled* the Law; and He received what the Law promised: Righteousness. So, in reality- Jesus *earned* His Own, Personal, Intrinsic Righteousness.

And at the Crucifixion- God the Father *imputed* (credited) all of the Sins, of those whom He chose for Salvation, onto Jesus. So, legally, Jesus became pure Sin while He was still personally sinless. And God the Father poured out the full Fury of His Wrath against all those Sins- on Jesus- acting as a Propitiation.

Romans 3:24&25a

24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith...

Hebrews 2:17

Therefore, He [Jesus] had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

1John 2:1b&2

1 ... if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;
2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.

1John 4:10

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Now the word, “*Propitiation*” was used in ancient Greek literature to describe something (or someone) who appeased the anger of the gods. So, that was what both Paul and John had in mind when they used this word in inspired Scripture. So, this word means much more than merely a “Substitute” (which is how many in the modern church use it). Jesus’ horrific Death on the Cross actually and literally “paid for” the Sins of all of God’s elect.

But just how did Jesus’ Death pay for all of the horrible and wicked thoughts and deeds that have been committed; and that are being committed now; and that will ever be committed in the future? By satisfying God’s Justice against those Sins.

So, on that Cross- the full fury of the Wrath of God against all Sin (brought about by God’s Justness) was poured out without measure on Jesus. Why? Because all of our Sins were *imputed* to Jesus- as He hung on the Cross. And as God’s

Wrath was poured out- God literally damned all Sin. And in doing that- God's Justice (Righteousness) was entirely vindicated.

So, Jesus satisfied the righteous Requirement that all insults and offenses to God's Glory must be damned- thus appeasing the Wrath of God. It was in this way that Jesus was a Propitiation. And by propitiating the offense against God's Righteousness- all Sin was forever damned; and no Sin went unpunished. (God by no means cleared the guilty [**Exodus 34:7**]). All sin was judged- but the *sinner* was *not* judged. Jesus died "in the place of" (Vicarious) those chosen for Salvation.

Now, because all sin has been forever judged/damned by God- He is now "free" to issue His glorious Mercy to those He has chosen to visit with that Gift. Thus, in the case of God's elect- God is Just in that He has avenged His Need to punish all sin. But this same God- is also the One Who then Justifies (Forgives and makes Just) those for whom Jesus died.

2Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Romans 3:21-28

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

26 for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

... to be continued