

Russell Kelfer

Blessed are the Merciful

534-A

Series: The Beatitudes

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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How many of you are farmers? How many gardeners? Have you ever planted corn and harvested wheat? Have you ever planted sunflower seeds and gotten tomatoes? Have you ever, simply from neglect, not planted anything only to walk out and see row after row of neatly arranged healthy vegetables? I doubt it. God has ordained in the physical realm a law called sowing and reaping. By His grace we reap what we have sown. It is a natural physical law.

Paul makes the spiritual switch in Galatians. He tells us that in the spiritual realm God has designed nature to teach truth. In Galatians 6:2 and then verses 7- 10, we read:

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
(Galatians 6:2 NKJV)

The word "bear" does not mean to be a bear when others have problems. It literally means to take their load onto your shoulders. Ian Thomas has a beautiful illustration where he refers to the Scripture in Matthew,

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest..
(Matthew 11:28 NKJV)

He says to imagine ourselves working out in the field. Someone comes up to us and says, "I want to give you a rest." He doesn't just stand there and watch you work, he takes the shovel and continues the digging while you rest. The same principle is true here. To bear another's burden means that you find another person who has a burden. You then go to him and ask him if you could take his burden for him. As much as humanly possible in the Spirit, you take that burden away from him and put it on your shoulders. The word "burdens" means that which weighs one down. "And so fulfill the law of Christ," then, is to be that obedient to the will of God.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

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And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

(Galatians 6:7-10 NKJV)

We see in verse 7 that God cannot be fooled. The second part of that verse, “whatsoever a man soweth, that will he also reap” adds, whatever response to God’s will a man has, He shall reap the results of that response. The result will be the harvest in his life. In verse 8 we see that reaping corruption means that as more sin and disobedience enters in his life he will also reap the consequence of that sin or disobedience. We see a picture of obedience in verse 10. This is God’s law of sowing and reaping. We can call it God’s boomerang law. This applies in three graphic areas of a Christian’s life. These areas have been tied together for our benefit in Luke 6:27-38.

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.

And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

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Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:27-38 NKJV)

So the Master prepares His disciples for this clear announcement of three directly reciprocal principles by dealing with motives. This is where Jesus always begins, dealing with motives. He says if we want someone to love, start with our enemies. If we want someone to bless, He calls us to love and bless those who curse and make fun of us. If someone slaps us undeservedly, don't come up swinging, allow him to do it again. If someone takes something that wasn't his, don't go after them. We need to offer him something even more valuable. If someone asks us to give, don't say no.

Jesus continues with a radical statement. He tells us not to just love the lovable, unbelievers can do that. Don't do for those who can give in return. Unbelievers can do that. Don't just lend to someone who can return the favor. Unbelievers do that every day. You must love your enemies, help others, lend to others and expect nothing in return. God, then, will reward you greatly. That is the kind of people God is after. You don't "do" to "get", and you don't "give" to "receive back" Jesus tells us. That is the motivational drive. Jesus says that "giving" and "doing" and "behaving" for the right reasons have certain causative affects. There are unbreakable, divine laws. He deals, in particular, now with three of them which surface throughout the Scripture. I am going to call them boomerang qualities, because they always come back to you.

1- Boomerang Quality. The first one is in Luke 6,

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (Luke 6:37 NKJV)

Matthew 7 reiterates it better,

“Judge not, that you be not judged.

For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

(Matthew 7:1,2 NKJV)

This passage puts a valve on your spirit of condemnation. It takes a divine reading and regulates the response God allows others to have of you to be in direct proportion to your judgmental spirit.

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If others are always suspect of you, if no one else is quite spiritual enough to suit you, if the negative qualities of other people always surface first, you will not have the peace of God where interpersonal relationships are involved, nor will you enjoy God's image of yourself where you are involved. You don't need to mark my words, mark God's Word. It says, judge not and ye shall not be judged. The judgment of God will be proportionate to yours.

2- Boomerang Quality. This is found in Luke 6. This has to do with giving.

Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”
(Luke 6:38 NKJV)

We are not to give to receive. Even the unbeliever can do that. Giving for the right motive will produce in us the capacity to receive at the hand of God more than we have ever dreamed we could. The picture is one who is trying to hold onto a sack of grain that is so full that it is spilling out everywhere, and it just keeps being filled. II Corinthians 9:6 in The Living Bible say this,

But remember this, if you give little, you will get little. A farmer who plants just a few seeds will only get a small crop, but if He plants much, He will reap much.
(II Corinthians 9:6 TLB)

We can see God's boomerang again. A condemning spirit will result in a life that is always in question, never accepted by self, never accepted by others. This will produce suspicious motives, never having trusted the motives in others. A giving spirit will result in a life that is filled with others who are giving in return. This life will be overflowing with the kind of love and generosity that you have given away.

3- Boomerang Quality. This is where we are in this lesson. Jesus said,

Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.
(Luke 6:36) NKJV

This reflects our Beatitude for this lesson which comes clearly across and says, “Oh what bliss for the man and the woman who is continuously showing mercy to others. That man or woman will be continuously the object of the mercy of God.” This is the boomerang principle. It is further explained in James–

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For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13 NKJV)

In II Samuel 22:26 we see,

“With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;
(II Samuel 22:26 NKJV)

So the principle we are dealing with in this Beatitude, “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy,” has multiple ramifications.

Principle 1- It is a divine commandment. We just read it.

Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.
(Luke 6:36 NKJV)

This doesn't mean just be merciful because God is. It means you are to be as merciful as God is because God is in you.

Principle 2- It has a boomerang effect. The measure with which you show mercy, you will receive mercy in direct proportion.

Principle 3- It leads to spiritual happiness, Oh what bliss, what spiritual joy.

If that is the case, I think we need to pay attention to the principle of mercy and look at our own lives under the microscope of God's expectations. In the next lesson we will examine where mercy comes from and how it looked in the life of Jesus. For the rest of this lesson, we are going to simply define and illustrate the quality of mercy.

No matter what concept you have of spiritual gifts, you probably agree that in the Scripture there is a gift of mercy. If you think you have this gift, you need to recognize certain qualities and responsibilities that go with the gift. The Scripture teaches that to whom much is given, much will be required. I would like to suggest to you that if you have the gift of mercy, you need to pay more serious attention to this lesson and the next. All of us need to pay attention, but those with the gift of mercy have been gifted in a special way to be portraits to the church of how that quality works within the church. Each of us has the responsibility to appropriate that mercy, but we are to look to the one with the gift of mercy for direction. So please pay close attention if you have the gift of mercy.

Let's begin by defining mercy. M-E-R-C-Y. An acronym for this could be Ministering Empathy Resulting from Christ in You.

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What is mercy? It is love with hands attached. These hands are dirty hands, callused hands, outstretched hands. These are hands that are there to catch you when you fall, hands that are there to help you up when you are already down. These are hands that are not pointing a finger of accusation, but holding a tissue to dry the tears. These are hands that are holding a plan to rebuild your life, hands that are holding a Bible to give meaning to it all. These are hands holding a plate of food when your stomach cries out or hands holding a coat when you are too cold to think. That my friend is mercy.

Mercy is not a saccharine-sweet sentimentality that weeps and considers its job done. Vine defines mercy, *eleao*, “to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially sympathy manifested in action.” Bullock defines mercy as “actively compassionate, not merely unhappy for the ills of others, but desirous of relieving them; not merely pity but beneficent aid promptly applied”.

The ever familiar parable in Luke 10 describes mercy perfectly. The parable of the Good Samaritan has a wounded man lying on the side of the road. The first two men who first passed on the other side of the road were “religious” men. They saw the man who had been beaten and robbed, but they didn’t really see him. They were clean men, busy men, important men. The Samaritan came along and really saw him. He saw his hurt, his pain, his helplessness, his hopelessness. The Samaritan wasn’t “religious” as far as we know. He wasn’t clean or important. Maybe that’s what qualified him. We read in Luke 10:33:

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

(Luke 10:33 NKJV)

He saw the wounded man and looked upon him intently with an eye to seeing his problem. Think about how many people you really did see this week. You may list all of the places you have been, but how many people did you really see? The verse tells us, when he SAW him, he had compassion on him. His heart broke and cried out, “Help him!” Now, how many people did you see this week? When the Samaritan had compassion on him, he went to him. That means he altered his plans and moved directly as an act of the will toward him. We go on to read that the Samaritan bound up his wounds and put him on his own donkey. He then took him to an inn to take care of him. The next day he took money, which can be the hardest thing for us to turn loose, and

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told the innkeeper to take care of him until he needed no more care. We see here unlimited compassion. Cost was not the issue. He then told the innkeeper whatever else was spent, he would reimburse him. He left his MasterCharge credit card.

Jesus asked, “Which one was the neighbor? Which one was the obedient believer?” His listeners responded, “He that showed mercy unto him.” Jesus then told them, “Go and do likewise.” Here in a few verses Jesus paints a picture of mercy that you and I can never forget. Mercy is not a feeling. The picture of mercy that we see here can be divided into 7 parts.

Part 1- He had empathy of spirit. When the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he had compassion on him. I think the Samaritan had been in that place before. You and I are called to show mercy to all men, especially to the household of the faith, but every time God or man shows mercy to you, I think it is to equip you to do the same for another in the same area. We talked about the Boomerang verse, I Corinthians 1:3-4. You can also turn to Hebrews 2:16-18.

We all know that He did not come as an angel, but as a human being—yes, a Jew,

And it was necessary for Jesus to be like us, His brothers, so that He could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God, a priest who would be both merciful to us and faithful to God in dealing with sins.

For since He Himself has been through suffering and temptations, He knows what it is like when we suffer and are tempted and He is wonderfully able to help us.

(Hebrews 2:16-18 TLB)

Jesus had mercy, because He had been there. A friend was sharing with me that when his father was in surgery, some people drove from miles away just to be with the family. They didn't know his father very well, but they wanted to participate in the prayer ministry and in the fellowship. Those who have the most impact and strive to be most merciful are those who have passed through something like it before. Those who had experienced cancer, trauma, serious illness and the like had the most mercy, because they were going through it or had been through it. Their hearts were broken for him. That is mercy in action.

I don't know what circumstance God has put in your life. You may have had a marriage problem, financial problems, physical

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problems or emotional problems. If God has shown you mercy in any one of these areas, you are part of God's Red Cross. He has assigned you to that particular division of His rescue work. Whenever you hear of someone in the body of Christ who has a need in that particular area, you need to stop and go. They need you, and God has shown you mercy during your time of need to equip you to minister to that person. That is mercy.

Part 2- He did not have a spirit of condemnation. Mercy does not condemn. He didn't pass by and say, "He's probably drunk. It serves him right. I don't drink." He didn't say, "If he had just been carrying mace, it wouldn't have happened." He didn't say, "His kind often get mugged." It was not his job to judge the character of the man in need. He knew it might be an angel unawares. The fact was that the need was big enough in itself.

Part 3- He was not condescending. He had a choice. He could call EMS. He could hand a note to the first medic or policeman who came by, or he could get his hands dirty. Have you ever thought of Jesus' mercy to us? He laid aside His robe, stooped down, took us from the dirt, bound up our wounds, took us to the Father and paid the price to the innkeeper forever so that all of our needs that we would ever have would be paid for. Then He stayed with us through it all. God could have sent an angel and kept His royal hands clean, but He chose to send His Son and commissioned Him to get dirty. It is a perfect picture of mercy.

Part 4- Notice that the Samaritan made a choice of the will to show mercy. It says "He went to him." Our pastor often says that this is where the rubber meets the road. This is where the decisions are made. This is where our hearts should be. This is, however, where most of us stop. If you look at Romans 9:15-18 you can see an interesting parallel.

For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."

Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.
(Romans 9:15-18 NKJV)

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We see here that God, by a determined act of His will chooses to show mercy. It is not an overwhelming emotion where God reaches for the tissue and says, "I've just got to do something for poor Joe." God by a determined act of His will, sees a need and says, "I will meet that need." He makes a choice, and He follows through. He chooses to be available.

Part 5- His choice resulted in activity to alleviate the suffering. He didn't choose to go put his arm around the guy's shoulder and say, "I sure am sorry you got mugged. It is a tough world we live in. Every time I pick up the paper, I get depressed. You are just another example of what depresses me. Here you are, lying there all bloody in the street. What a rough deal you've got. I want you to know I hurt for you. I'll see you around. Oh yeah, let me leave you a tract. God loves you."

The Scripture tells us that the Samaritan bound up the wounds of the man and put him on a donkey to walk him to an inn. He put the man on the donkey and he walked. I John 3:16-18 in the Amplified Version says:

By this we come to know, progressively recognize perceive and understand love that He laid down His own life for us and we ought to lay our lives down for those who are our brothers in Him.

But if anyone has this world's goods, resources for sustaining life, and sees his brother and fellow believer in need but closes his Heart of compassion against him, how can the love of God live and remain in him?

Little children, let us not love merely in theory and speech, but in deed and in truth and in practice and in sincerity.

(I John 3:16-18 Amplified Bible)

Part 6- We see that real mercy comes without grudging. He didn't groan and moan, at least there is no indication of that from his performance. He didn't say, "Good grief, I'm going to be late for my meeting. But I've got to do something, God told me to." He didn't throw down his bag, pick up the wounded man and say, "Come on, I'm going to help you to the nearest inn." We are told that he gently picked him up, took him to the inn and stayed up all night to care for him without even calling a doctor.

Romans 12:8 talks about how to show forth mercy. It is a particular admonition especially to those with the gift of mercy, but it is also to everyone in the body of Christ. It says,

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to those who have mercy, show mercy with cheerfulness.

(Romans 12:8)

This is just like the passage that says to give hospitality one to another without wishing that you didn't have to. We are to show mercy with cheerfulness.

Part 7- The Samaritan man carried his task through to completion. How this hurts. He saw his brother had a need. He stopped, he went and met that need. He stayed with him attending to the need, and then saw to it that the need would continue to be met after he was gone. He left money with the innkeeper and told him he would pay for anything else if the money wasn't enough. He didn't even know the wounded man.

Most of us, if we would have gotten him to the next town, would shrug our shoulders and say to ourselves, "What a neat guy I am. Praise God. How lucky He is to have me." Our attitude may have been that the wounded man was laying in the dirt, but now he is in the city. I've done my part. How many times have you and I wanted Brownie points on our spiritual merit badges, because we have stopped and helped someone just long enough to salve our consciences and press on?

Completion is characteristic of God. Did you notice that when God created things, He did it to total completion, and then said, "It is finished." On the cross He paid the price for our salvation and then said, "It is finished." Paul said, "I've come to the end of my road. I've done exactly what God wanted me to. It is finished." The purpose of God is for us to complete what has been started. As a church, as an individual, as a family God's goal is to have us finish. The Samaritan's goal was not Brownie points. The goal was to see the man healed. The long haul separates real mercy from what the world calls charity.

In the next lesson, we will look at the cycle of mercy, the source of mercy, and the example of mercy. There is a world out there that is dramatically confused about Christianity. They have been told that Christianity is the essence of love, the loss of self. They try to relate to an early church where everyone literally gave up everything for everybody as opposed to a church who now won't give up anything that is not tax deductible. They try to relate to our gospel that talks about forgiving seventy times seven as opposed to Christians who won't even speak to each other, because they have a minor doctrinal position or belong to

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a different denomination. The world tries to relate to the gospel that talks about visiting prisoners in jail when today not many Christians do. They try to relate to a gospel that talks about visiting the sick, yet the unpopular sick lie in hospital beds lonely, day after day after day. They try to relate to a gospel that talks about loving the dirty up close, but they see churches content to boast of their budgets, but have the absence of personal involvement.

The reason the world is confused is us. I will speak for myself. I, personally, love the lovable. I give to those who can give back. I reach out to the clean, middle, upper class Protestant who talks my language and whose needs won't make me too vulnerable. And I'm supposed to be your teacher. It is no small wonder that the world is confused. Jesus was not confused. He was very, very clear. He simply said, (paraphrased)

“Oh what bliss for the one who is willing to get dirty, the one who is willing to get involved in the healing of the hurts of others. God Himself and through others will heal their hurts and their needs.”

My friend, that is power. That is Christianity. That is mercy. That, my friends, is the will of God for us.

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It's been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that's a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

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