

The Cover of Mercy **Matthew 5:1-7**

Mercy is ‘mysteriously unnatural’ – you would think that Mercy is the one thing Christians would instinctively dispense – and yet it seems to be just the opposite. There is something in all of us that naturally resists offering what we have received.

The ‘world spirit’ says, ‘get even,’ ‘everyone is on his own,’ ‘take what is owed you.’

But Jesus says...

- Happy are those who bend to the Broken
- Happy are those who alleviate the suffering of others
- Blessed are they who love on the Miserable

Two Things You Should Know

- **Mercy is when we see or perceive the misery someone else is in, and then do something about it**

Psalm 116:1 – I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Verse 6 – “...when I was in need he saved me.”

God’s Mercy is never received apart from one’s realization of how desperately needful they are of it. We see this in the miracles Jesus performed. In each case Jesus helped where there was need, and in each instance the person involved knew there was nothing they could do to rescue themselves.

There were no lectures – no condemning words – no hesitations. It isn't that God doesn't care – it is that when He dispenses Mercy He has already revealed to us our desperate need.

- **Mercy is a Divine Cover**

Each year the High Priest – Every year an animal was slaughtered – its blood sprinkled on the horns of this lid symbolizing the covering Mercy of God over our sins.

You can see why the Word of God is soaked in Mercy – it is the lifeblood and power of the Gospel's message.

Micah 7:18 – Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.

The promise here is that the only ones who give Mercy understand how much they need it – and those are the ones who do receive Mercy.

How Do We Respond?

1. Run for Cover

Live the life of repentance that brings you to the place where you cry, 'Have mercy on me, the sinner' – every day. Don't allow yourself to be deluded into thinking that you are ever where you don't need God's Mercy. This is the folly of the damned and the cold-hearted. And as you run for cover, God will soften you to Himself.

Hebrews 4:16 – “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

The Gospel promises that every time you come to the Throne of God knowing your need for Him – you will receive Mercy.

2. Rehearse God's Kindness to You

When we are unmerciful it is usually because we have forgotten God's kindnesses to us – our hearts become dry and hardened and our offerings rotten. We believe the lie that we deserve all we have when the Gospel teaches just the opposite.

The Gospel calls us to bend to the Broken – to receive with thanksgiving what God has given by becoming a gift of Mercy to those who bow under the weight of sin.

Zechariah 7:9 – “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.’”

Resist the instinct to apply a different standard to others than you have received from the Lord. Perhaps nothing grieves the heart of God so much.

Here is a good rule of thumb when it comes to demonstrating Mercy: Don't focus on what someone did to you – focus on what **God** has done for you. You want to know how you can get past what your husband or wife or friend or boss did to you? Look at what God has done for you.

Rehearse this... then practice it.

3. Risk – Do Something Merciful because of the Gospel

Mercy is the only realistic solution all the way around – for us, for our witness and for our world – and someone needs to dispense it in human form – this is the role of the Church.

Ask God to use you to make you an Agent of Mercy. Don't let your life be a boring story of unproven promises and wasted blessings. Determine that you will enter the adventure of the Gospel and do what Jesus did by diving into the pathos of the world you live in.

Reassess every Relationship and every Encounter against the Gospel:

- Deciding that someone can't be forgiven for any reason other than the Gospel is unacceptable to God.
- Determining that you shouldn't extend Mercy because someone deserves where he or she are is a violation of how God views you.
- Living a safe, clean, antiseptic life is not an option – God calls us to love the unlovely, the undeserving and the downtrodden.

Jesus loved the Merciful. His stories and teachings were soaked in Mercy – and of course this is because the Gospel is.

After all, are we not 'those who had not received mercy, but now have received mercy?' according to 1 Peter 2:10?

Jesus is the Cover of Mercy. He is the '...love that covers a multitude of sins.' He is the Complete One who was Broken for you. He is the One who wore chains to release prisoners "who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:15). He wore a crown of thorns on His head that we would wear His Righteousness in our souls.