

Matthew 5:7

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[0 : 0 0] Do sit and turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 6. We're going through the Beatitudes. Matthew chapter 5 actually. Matthew chapter 5. And we're looking at what Jesus means by happiness.

! So listen to this piece of poetry.

It's a 16th century epitaph. It's written for a man who was killed by falling from his horse. And this is what's written on his tombstone.

My friend, judge not me. Thou seest, I judge not thee. Betwixt the stirrup and the ground. Mercy I asked.

Mercy I found. He fell off the horse. And from falling off the saddle to the ground, he says, I cried for mercy and I found mercy before I hit the ground.

[1 : 1 2] Well, he left it late, didn't he? But not too late. He asked for mercy. And apparently he found mercy. It's never too late to seek God's mercy.

Whatever your past history may be tonight. Whatever sins you've committed. Whatever debts you might have plumed. It's still possible at the 11th hour. To know the mercy of God.

But the Bible also tells us, doesn't it? The other truth. It says don't take God's mercy for granted. So William Guthrie says that the Bible ranges over about 4,000 years. It records but one instance of a deathbed conversion.

One that none may despair. And but one that none may presume. Jesus says, blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. And so let me ask you right at the start tonight.

Have you obtained mercy? And I think you might be here tonight and you're not sure whether you've obtained mercy from God. And it's really important for you and I to face that question.

[2 : 1 3] Jesus doesn't say, blessed are those who know that there's such a thing as mercy. They know that there's mercy available somehow in some way or another.

He says, blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. So have you obtained mercy? If you say, I don't know. Can you see the oddness of that?

You don't do your shopping like that do you? You don't go to the co-op and come back knowing, not knowing whether you've bought the thing you went in to buy for in the first place. You know whether you've obtained it.

And we are supposed to know whether or not we've obtained mercy from God. It's a really important thing. I want to give you three Ps. So first of all, there's a promise, isn't there?

Really obviously. They shall obtain mercy. And then secondly, I want to look at the persons to whom the promise is made. Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy or they shall obtain mercy.

[3 : 1 4] And then thirdly, there's a problem. And if you haven't seen the problem yet, you will. So first of all, the promise. Perhaps the best example and illustration of what mercy is, is found in the story of the Good Samaritan.

It's an old story, isn't it, with a really modern ring. There's a man on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. And on the way to Jericho, he gets mugged.

He's set upon by a gang of thugs. He gets beaten up. His wallet is stolen. They take his phone. He's left for dead on the side of the road. It happened a lot then, like it does today.

For a lot of people, it was just another headline in the newspaper. Just another figure in the crime statistics. And the guy's left there for dead on the side of the road.

And the priest and the Levite come along. The church and the law. Two great pillars of the establishment. Well, what they could do for this man?

[4 : 18] What can they do for this man? Well, you know the story. And they do nothing for the man. We're told that they pass by. You're not even next to him on the other side of the street. Why?

Well, probably not because they're indifferent to the state and the condition of the poor man. They're not totally lacking in the milk of human kindness. But it wasn't safe.

It would be a risky business to cross the road. They would think, well, I might face the same treatment as this man got. It's better not to get involved. It's better to leave this kind of thing to the professionals.

And so off they go. And then a Samaritan comes along. Do you remember the Samaritans and the Jews? They're sworn enemies. The Samaritans have suffered a great deal at the hands of the Jews.

So to get the point, let's imagine it's a Palestinian and an Israeli. It's that kind of situation. David and Marshall were telling me in the Persian Bible study.

[5 : 21] They spoke about what would you do if it was a member of the Revolutionary Guard that was lying there. And they said, our Persian brothers were absolutely horrified. How could you help somebody from the Revolutionary Guard?

And it's that kind of situation. The Jews and the Samaritans are sworn enemies. They've got nothing in common. The Samaritan owed nothing to the Jew.

He'd suffered a great deal at the hands of the Jews. And yet it's the Samaritan who crossed the road and tended to the man's wounds. Takes him to an Airbnb. And pays for his bed and breakfast for a few days.

And then he comes back and he settles the debt. And that's the story of the Good Samaritan. That is what mercy is. It's a flesh and blood illustration of mercy.

What is mercy? It's more than kindness. Somebody has put it like this. Mercy. Kindness is a friend calling on you when you're well.

[6 : 17] Kindness is a friend calling on you when you're well. Mercy is that same friend calling on you when you're sick. Mercy is more than kindness. What is mercy?

Feeling sorry for someone? Yes. Feeling empathy for someone? That's part of it. But it's much more. It's feeling sorry for somebody who's treated you badly. It's moving into that situation. Crossing the road and doing something about the situation. It's meeting the person in their misery. That's what mercy is. Of course the best illustration of that is what God has done for us in Jesus. God could have operated on a policy of non-involvement. If you wanted. But he has come into our humanity. He's come to us in all our fallenness.

He's come into this world where men and women are bruised and broken by the fall. Dead in their trespasses and sins. And God has come here in the person of his son Jesus Christ.

[7 : 20] And he's come to help and he's come to take on our enemies. And that's what Calvary is about isn't it? That's what happened at the cross. He came to destroy sin and Satan.

He came to destroy the enemies of the human race. That have held us captive. And he's come not to take us to an Hebbian Bay. But to take us to his home. To the new creation.

To heaven to live with him forever. That is mercy. And so have you got it? Do you know it? The Apostle Paul describes himself in this way.

As a man who has obtained mercy. So just come with me if you want to 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy chapter 1. And he speaks of himself in that passage. And he describes himself as the chief of sinners.

Let me read it to you. 1 Timothy chapter 1. And he says there in verse 12.

[8 : 16] I thank God who has given me strength. Christ Jesus our Lord because he has judged me faithful. Appointed me to his service. Though formerly I was a blasphemer. A persecutor.

And an insolent opponent. But I received mercy. Because I had acted ignorant in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord overflowed for me. With the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of whom I'm the foremost. The biggest sinner. But I received mercy for this reason. That in me as the foremost.

Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience. As an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. So the king of the ages. Immortal. Invisible. The only God. Be honour and glory forever and ever.

Amen. He says. I was the chief of sinners. The greatest of sinners. And yet I received mercy. And his reasoning is this.

[9 : 14] If I obtained mercy. If I was shown mercy. There's mercy there for you. If I'm the pattern. For all who will come after me. If Jesus Christ has shown mercy to me.

The chief of sinners. Then surely he can show mercy to you. Have you persecuted the church? Have you hounded down Christians? Slaughtered them?

You haven't done that. Have you? You see. When Paul speaks to himself. As the chief of sinners. It isn't just a mock humility. I'm the worst of the worst. You know. It isn't just a subjective feeling. That he has concerning himself. There's no one as bad as I am. It isn't just that. Paul's argument. Is that he objectively was.

The chief of sinners. No one has ever been. As great a sinner. As he. And he says. If God had mercy on me. Then he'll have mercy on you. Spurgeon puts this brilliantly.

[10 : 14] He says this. If a bridge. Is strong enough. To bear an elephant. It will certainly. Carry a mouse. And if the greatest sinner. Who has ever lived. Has entered heaven. By the bridge.

The greatest sinner. Who's ever lived. Has entered heaven. By the bridge. Of the atoning. Sacrifice of Christ. No man. Who has ever lived. May ever say. My sin. Is beyond forgiveness.

And so. There's the promise. The promise. Is the promise. Of mercy. In Jesus Christ. For sinful men. And women. Boys and girls. Like you and I. For those who are bruised. And broken by the fall. For those who are out of a relationship. With God. In this world. Who are without hope. And without God. There is mercy tonight. And God.

Want you to know. Tonight. That he not only cares for you. In your life. And in your hurts. And in your problems. And in your difficulties. But he wants you to know. That he's done something about it.

[11 : 13] He sent his son into this world. To put things right. And so there's the mercy promise. Now secondly. I want you to notice. The persons to whom this promise is made. The persons to whom this promise is made.

Jesus says. Blessed are the merciful. For they shall obtain mercy. And the emphasis. As we've seen all the way through. Is right in the beginning. Right slap bang.

In the middle of the verses. Jesus saying. Blessed are the merciful. For they. And only they. Shall receive mercy. Only those who are merciful. Will obtain mercy.

Let me show you how this works. Think of a man. His name is called Onesiphorus. It's a funny name.

He's a character in the New Testament. You might not know of him. And he's one of. The least known characters. In all the New Testament. Paul speaks about him. In 2 Timothy.

[12 : 09] And he puts it like this. He compares Onesiphorus. With the attitude of. All the other believers. In Asia. And he says. In verse 15. Of 2 Timothy.

He says. All of those in Asia. Have deserted me. So remember. Why Paul is writing that letter. He's an old man. He's in prison. He's on death row. And he says. All in Asia.

Have turned away from me. Nobody cared less. About me in prison. As far as they were concerned. It was not their business. It was somebody else's business. He says.

Among them. Are these people. Homogenies. And he goes on. To describe. The man. 2 Timothy. Chapter 1. He says.

Verse 15. He says. You are aware. That all in Asia. Turned away from me. Among whom are. Phygelus and Homogenies. And then he says this. He says. May the Lord. Grant mercy.

[13 : 04] To the household. Of Anasiphorus. For he has often. Refreshed me. And was not ashamed. Of my chains. And when he arrived in Rome. He searched for me. Earnestly. And he found me.

May the Lord. Grant him. To find mercy. From the Lord. On that day. And you well know. All the service. He rendered to me. At Ephesus. He was. Maybe a businessman.

Who went to Rome. We know. That he searched diligently. He wasn't. It was hard. To find Paul. In the prison. But he went.

To show mercy. He did all that he could. To care for Paul. He was a merciful man. Now. Do you see the point there? The point is. Because Anasiphorus. Was merciful. Paul says.

I pray that God. Will be merciful to him. I pray that God. Will be merciful. To his family. And his household. I pray that God. Will be merciful to him. On that day.

[13 : 58] When he will most. Need the mercy of God. On the day. When the accounts. Have settled. On the day of judgment. I pray that Anasiphorus. Will know mercy. Because he is a merciful man. And so this is really important.

It's really important. That you and I. Have got no right. To expect. That we'll have mercy. On the day of judgment. If. We're not merciful people. That's what the Bible teaches.

Think about our Lord's teaching. On the day of judgment. From Matthew 25. And he describes. The day of judgment. He describes. That great day.

Of settling. Accounts. He says this. When the son of man. Comes in his glory. And all the angels. With him. He will sit. On his glorious throne. Verse 34.

Then the king. Will say to those. On his right. Come you. Who are blessed. By my father. Inherit. The kingdom. Prepared. For you. Before the foundation. In the world. If I was hungry. And you fed me. I was thirsty. And you gave me a drink.

[15 : 01] I was a stranger. You welcomed me. I was naked. And you clothed me. I was sick. And you visited me. I was in prison. And you came. To me. Before the water you won. It says. Then he will say. To those on his left.

Depart from me. You cursed. Into eternal fire. Prepared for the devil. And his angels. If I was hungry. And you gave me no food. Thirsty. And you gave me no drink. So can you see. What Jesus says. Is the criteria. For judgment. It's mercy. Mercy. It's what you and I. Will be judged on.

That is the evidence. That we brought into court. And God will assess. Whether we're really Christians. By the criteria. Of mercy. I came across this letter.

In preparation. From a homeless woman. Who'd been turned. She'd gone to a kind of. Country vicar. And. He turned her away. Let me read it to you. She wrote.

[15 : 58] To the country vicar. I was hungry. And you formed. A humanities group. To discuss my hunger. I was imprisoned. And you crept off. Quietly to your chapel.

And prayed for my release. I was naked. And in your mind. You debated. The morality of my appearance. I was sick. And you knelt. And thanked God.

For your health. I was homeless. And you preached to me. Of the spiritual shelter. Of the love of God. I was lonely. And you left me alone. To pray for me. You seem so holy.

So close to God. But I am still. Very hungry. And lonely. And cold. They are very challenging words. The times. The times.

And the Bible. Really brings you up short. Isn't there? James 2 verse 13. Says. For judgment. Is without mercy. To the one. Who has shown. No mercy. That means.

[16 : 54] To appear before God. On the last day. And to be dealt with. As we deserve. To be dealt with. Without any mercy. At all. Judgment. Is without mercy. For those who show.

No mercy. And so. There is a problem. Isn't there? And I hope. You have seen the problem. The problem is.

How does this fit. With Romans 1 to 4? Is Christianity. Really all about. Being a good Samaritan? Is it. Salvation by works. Because it sounds it.

Blessed.