

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 1)

The Good Life – A Fresh look at the Beatitudes

Study 5 – Mercy for the Merciful

Introduction

'Revenge' is an ugly word, one that we are not likely to use in 'polite company' as the saying goes. And yet the truth is that when we feel aggrieved or demeaned or insulted in some way, the desire for 'payback' or 'getting even' can all too easily arise in our hearts and shape the way we respond to those who have hurt or insulted us. "Don't get mad, get even" the slogan says, and though we laugh, we do so knowing that the sentiment behind those words is just a little too close to home for comfort.

Not that we want the payback mentality to be expressed in reverse of course. We want the right to get even when we have been wronged, but when we are in the wrong we expect others to forgive and forget. Thus we look for mercy, even when we ourselves are lacking in mercy toward others.

Jesus' words in Matthew 5:7 remind us that in God's kingdom mercy matters and that mercy is reserved for the merciful. We cannot expect to receive from God or from others what we ourselves are not willing to give. But even here it is easy for us to twist the meaning of Jesus' words either by making mercy something that must be earned rather than given or by setting mercy and righteousness over and against one another. As with all the Beatitudes, Jesus' words in Matthew 5:7 challenge our thinking and attitudes, causing us to take a fresh look at mercy and why mercy is so important in the kingdom of heaven.



Investigate and Think



Read Matthew 5:7

- What do you think it means to be 'merciful' ?

- According to this Psalm what does it look like for the LORD to have mercy?
- How would you use Psalm 86 to answer the person who says that God's mercy is something that can or must be earned?
- In what way does the Psalmist expect to act when he has received God's mercy? (vs11-13)

Now Read Micah 6:3-8

- What had the LORD done for Israel in their history? (vs4-5)
- What did the LORD require of Israel in response to His mercy? (vs8)

Read Matthew 5:7 again

- In the light of what you have learned from Psalm 86 and Micah 6:3-8, what do you understand Jesus to be saying in this Beatitude?



Apply

- In what way have Jesus' words in Matthew 5:7 challenged or encouraged you?

- Would you consider yourself to be a merciful person?

- If your answer above was 'No', what needs to change in your attitude and actions for this Beatitude to be true of you?

- If your answer above was 'Yes', what are the areas in which you need to grow in relation to this Beatitude?