

I Desire Mercy Ողորմութիւն եւ ոչ՝ Ջոճ

Matthew 9:9-13; 18:31-35; 23:23-24

Justice is getting what you deserve, mercy is not getting what you deserve, and grace is getting what you don't deserve.

The prodigal son is a great example of mercy. The father had given everything to the son. He took them, got out, left his family, wasted the inheritance, then eventually came to his senses and wanted to come back home. The father saw the child coming from far, ran towards him, humiliating himself, as grown up men do not run in the Middle East. He exposed his legs so that he could run fast towards his son. All those were taboos in the society of the day. He did not care. He had love, compassion and mercy towards his son. Justice said the father would have to kick him out of the house. He did not do it. The son did not get what he deserved. On the contrary, he got the best welcome.

We arrive to the fifth beatitude:

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (Matthew 5:7 ESV)

Four beatitudes ended with receiving God's righteousness. The poor in Spirit, the ones who mourn over their sins feeling miserable about their situation, the meek who are God-controlled and accept criticism without defensiveness, the ones who hungry and thirsty for righteousness are now full of God's righteousness. Four beatitudes of emptiness prepare the person to be filled with God's love, care, compassion and now mercy. We can be merciful because we have experienced Christ's mercy in our lives. The person who has experienced Christ's mercy has become merciful. We can be merciful because God is merciful.

“The mercy that God blesses is itself the blessing of God. It grows up like fruit in a broken heart and a meek spirit and a soul that hungers and thirsts for God to be merciful. Mercy comes from mercy. Our mercy to each other comes from God's mercy to us.”¹

Have you ever experienced mercy in your life? When did you do something wrong and you were spared from the consequences? Have you ever been the recipient of mercy?

No wonder Jesus did not say, “Blessed are the merciful” in the first beatitude. If one’s heart is not broken or softened by God’s mercy and presence, one cannot show any mercy to anyone. It is like forgiveness; we need to experience God’s forgiveness first to be able to forgive others.

We just read from Matthew 9, where Jesus was eating with the tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees did not like this. How come the rabbi would eat with the “wrong kind of people?” The “right kind of people” don’t want to have anything to do with the “wrong kind of people.” What was Jesus’ response?

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:12-13ESV)

The phrase **“I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”** Jesus is quoting from Hosea. Their love towards God was so superficial, like the morning dew that disappeared in the morning hour. What is left from a burnt offering? Just ashes. All expressions of our worship including our service and our gifts to God are meaningless if **the heart is not transformed.**

-What is mercy?

In Greek *Eleemon*. It means compassionate (actively):—merciful.(Lexicon)

Hebrew word or Aramaic will be *Raham*: mercy, womb.

Barclay says: “mercy, means the ability to get right inside the other person’s skin until we can see things with his/her eyes, the things with his/her mind, and feel things with his/her feelings.”²

So this is more than an emotional wave of pity; **it demands a deliberate effort to wear the shoes of the other person.** This is what God did through Jesus. Jesus

became human, like us, to have mercy on us and to save us. **God got inside our skin.** The best way to explain it is the incarnation of our Lord.

On the other hand, John Stott explains the difference of mercy and grace:

Mercy is compassion for people in need. "The noun *eleos* (mercy) ... always deals with what we see of pain, misery and distress, these results of sin.

Charis (grace) always deals with the sin and guilt itself. The one extends relief, the other pardon; the one cures, heals, helps, the other cleanses and reinstates."

(John R. W. Stott)

Illustration: A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy."

"But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied.

"Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."

"Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son.³

Justice is getting what you deserve; mercy is not getting what you deserve...

A. What should be our attitude when we receive mercy?

Grateful? Blessed? Willing to do the same? Proudful? "Well, of course I deserve mercy...God has to grant me mercy...He is God, God has a big heart...He can take it; He has to be merciful... I deserve it..."

Let us read the second passage: **Matthew 18:21-35**

In the passage that we read we see the master eventually forgave his servant who owed him a huge sum of money. Yet the unjust servant did not forgive a fellow servant a few dollars' debt. When the master heard this he was angry: he said:

‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ (Matthew 18:32-33 ESV)

Do you think the wicked servant understood what mercy was all about?

Let me say it again: **We cannot earn mercy.** **God’s mercy is free of charge.** There is nothing we can do to merit God’s mercy, nothing...

Yet, if we are asking God for mercy without offering it to others...I don’t think we have received the mercy offered by God.

In the **Lord’s Prayer** we ask God to forgive us as we forgive others. It is not conditional. God will forgive us if we ask him. Yet Jesus was saying as we experience God’s forgiveness and mercy, **we learn** to do the same with others. If we don’t forgive or have a merciful heart, I don’t think we have truly asked God for forgiveness in our heart or have received His forgiveness. Our prayer is meaningless.

B. The far more important matters:

Jesus cannot stand hypocrisy. The word hypocrisy means to put on a mask. Under the mask there is something else.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!” (Matthew 23:23-24 ESV)

Jesus is saying to the scribes and Pharisees: “You look religious, pretending to do all the right things, but you are neglecting the far more important things.”

“The Mosaic Law required giving a tenth of all that one produced for the ongoing work of the Lord; the Pharisees were so scrupulous in following this injunction that they paid a tithe even from their smallest garden crops (mint, dill, cumin). (Lev. 27:30-33) Jesus does not say that they were wrong in this (“These you ought

to have done”), but that they should do this without neglecting the far more important matters.⁴

-What are the important things?

You have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness...

My interpretation: “Enough spending time on superficial things as if you are so religious and doing religious stuff; enough cleaning the vessel from the outside neglecting the real cleaning from the inside (Matthew 23:26). Instead of playing ‘religious games’, practice justice, mercy and faithfulness in your life.”

Any activity in the church such as preaching, teaching, tithing, praying, singing, cooking or hosting that does not cultivate a merciful heart is a vain, empty and meaningless activity.⁵

C. The best example of mercy is the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10)

You all know the story. I would love to concentrate on the Good Samaritan and his practical ways of showing mercy and love to a stranger, a Jewish man (risky business).

1. He stopped and looked. I read a book once was called: “Get off your donkey” or we can say, “Get out of the boat.”

2. He had compassion. We read: “**when he saw him, he had compassion.**” You can have compassion and then what?

For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power.
(1 Corinthians 4:20)

3. He took care of the wounds

He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. (Luke 10:34ESV).

He took practical steps to heal the person.

4. He completed the work. Follow up is important, so he makes sure that next day is another day for healing the person.

And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' (Luke 10:35ESV)

5. He took a risk in showing mercy: a Samaritan helping an enemy, a Jew. A Jew who did not like Samaritans, they were the unclean ones... Showing mercy towards the "other", the enemy.

Application:

1. Come to God with a humble heart asking for mercy.

Two people went to pray, one a publican and the other a tax collector:

One said, "I do this, I do that. I am religious....blah-blah-blah

The other one said: "Lord have mercy on me a sinner!"

Ask for God's mercy and compassion....

2. If you have received mercy from God, show mercy to others. Be practical.

Illustration: About 20 years ago in Ainjar a tragic incident happened. I was the school principal and one of the Kindergarten parents had a tragic loss. She had a 3-year-old child in our school and she had just lost a second child, but who was born with heart problems. A month after the newborn died, the mother was visiting a shop in the village when her 3-year-old child escaped from her hand and run into the street. A car was passing that moment and it hit the child. The child died on the spot. You can see the tragedy of this family. You can also imagine this village, where revenge was common.

She lost two children within one month. The driver of that car was from my parish. The mother of the children was a former a graduate student of our school, from the school of Ainjar, and the child was our Preschool student.

She was mourning with her family and friends. The driver was mourning with his family and friends. When I visited the mother, I mourned with her. Then she

asked something I will never forget. "Badveli, go and bring the driver Varouj (that is not his real name) and let us mourn together."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." (Matthew 5:7 ESV)

Questions for you:

- Have you experienced God's mercy in your life?
- Are you merciful? Why or why not.
- Have you experienced other people's mercy towards you?
- Be open to show mercy to someone this week.

1. John Piper, *Blessed Are the Merciful*, Feb 23, 1986
2. William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*, Matthew P 103
3. Luis Palau, *Experiencing God's Forgiveness*, Multnomah Press, 1984.
4. ESV Commentary on Matthew
5. John Piper, *Blessed Are the Merciful*, Feb 23, 1986

Mercy is compassion for people in need. Richard Lenski helpfully distinguishes it from "grace": "The noun **eleos** (mercy) ... always deals with what we see of pain, misery and distress, these results of sin; and **charis** (grace) always deals with the sin and guilt itself. The one extends relief, the other pardon; the one cures, heals, helps, the other cleanses and reinstates." (John R. W. Stott)
<http://www.missionoutreach.org/trvsj012.html>