Happy are the Merciful

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[0:00] Please open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5. We have been in the Beatitudes, which has been an amazing chapter, amazing verses of Scripture.

Matthew 5, verses 1 to 12. I'm going to be focusing just on the fifth Beatitude, verse 7, but I will read the whole thing. But let me pray before I do.
Father, we are all sinners in need of mercy.
And you have given us so much mercy. And so we ask God that right now, you would address us from your word.
And help us to remember and relish the great mercy that you have shown us in Jesus Christ.
[1:20] And even as we rehearse those truths, want you transform us. Renew our own mercy, the mercy that we show to those around us.

Meet with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you're able, please stand for the reading of God's word from Matthew 5.
I'll read from verse 1 to verse 12.■■ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you, persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
[2:45] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecute the prophets who are before you. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. We have come to the pivot point of the Beatitudes.

I've mentioned a couple times before that the first four Beatitudes all describe a form of emptiness. Lacking something. Being poor in spirit.
Being needy. Being meek. Being hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Mourning something you lack. But we go from needing mercy, people who need mercy in the first four Beatitudes, now to being merciful.
Being full of mercy toward others. And the rest of the Beatitudes will be describing Christian fullness. What we are like as God's mercy overflows from our own lives.
And so the main point of this message that I want to share with you this evening is that those who have received God's mercy are merciful toward others. And that they will receive mercy in turn.
[3:51] So first we'll talk about what mercy is. Secondly, how to become full of mercy. And third, we'll talk about who receives mercy. In terms of details, we don't find much in verse 7.

It just says, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. But mercy, if you trace this theme throughout the scriptures, is manifold.
It's variegated. It's very rich with layers of meaning. But first, let's look at the most relevant context in the Gospel of Matthew itself. In Matthew 9, 27, in Matthew 20, verse 30, we see the blind men crying out to Jesus for help, saying, Have mercy on me.
We hear a similar cry from a Canaanite woman whose daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. In Matthew 15, 22, Have mercy on me. And then a man whose son is suffering from terrible seizures in Matthew 17, 15, again, Have mercy on me.
We see that pattern in the other Gospels as well. A leper cries out, Have mercy on me. So from this pattern of people who cry out for mercy, we can see that mercy is associated with those who are in need.
[5:05] It belongs to those who need help. Those who are not entitled to something or have earned something, but someone who needs mercy nonetheless.

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That's why the Greek word for alms or charitable giving used in the New Testament is derived from the same word for mercy. So in Matthew 6, 2-4, when Jesus speaks of giving to the needy, if you translate them more literally, it's doing acts of mercy.
So mercy is an expression. Charitable giving is an act of mercy, expression of mercy. So it's the needy who cry out for mercy. Jesus confirms this in Matthew 9, 10-13.
The Pharisees criticize Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners. And Jesus says, So once again, who are the objects of mercy?
It's the sick, not the healthy. It's the sinners, not the righteous. The needy need mercy. To be merciful then is to have compassion for the needy in both your disposition toward them and your deed toward them.
[6:32] In both your attitude and your actions, to have compassion for the needy. In situations where there is physical, material need, the merciful are going to have the impulse to meet that need, tangible ways to help them.

In spiritual situations, when there's spiritual need, where there are sinners, the impulse of the merciful will be to forgive and to be gracious. When Jesus says, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, he is contrasting, he's quoting from Hosea 6, verse 6, and he is contrasting genuine inward piety from superficial outward piety, fleeting outward piety.
It's the same distinction that Samuel makes in 1 Samuel 15, 22. You may know the story. When Saul, the king of Israel, was instructed by God to destroy the Amalekites because of their wickedness and to not take any spoils from the war.
However, Saul decides that that's too much of a waste. Well, look at all this good livestock, look at all this treasure, look at all this food, and he decides to keep them for himself and for the people. And when Samuel confronts him about his disobedience, Saul deviously says, Oh, no, no, no, I kept all this so that we could bring it as a sacrifice to God. And then Samuel says, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?
[8:00] Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fad of rams. How many times have we paid lip service to God and made outward sacrifices, show of piety, while inwardly our hearts are far from him?

Maybe even using these shows of piety as misdirection to distract people's attention from our disobedience. Maybe even seeking to distract God himself.
That's what the Pharisees did. On the outside, they were righteous because they were great at keeping up an appearance of conformity, keeping the formalities of rituals, but they did not truly know God or obey God from the heart.
And how do we know that they didn't obey God from the heart? Because they had no mercy towards sinners. In Matthew 23, 23, 24, Jesus denounces the Pharisees saying, 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. These Pharisees painstakingly kept the minutiae of the law.
[9:21] They would, we talk about tithing and sometimes people ask me, do you tithe from the net or from the gross? Like, what do you, what do you do? Like, it's kind of like those questions a little bit, but they were tithing 10% of the smallest spices that they used to God.

They carefully strained out a gnat from their drinks and foods. The gnat is the smallest insect that caused impurity in Jewish ritual. However, after straining out a gnat, they turned around and they ate camels, which is the largest unclean animal ceremonially in the Old Testament.
They weren't literally eating camels. Jesus is using a figure of speech to say that they care about the minutiae, painstakingly care about the minutiae, and then they neglect the weightier matters of the law. So what is Jesus saying?
He's speaking of priorities, being merciful, showing mercy is the bigger stuff that God cares about. Mercy is one of the weightier matters of the law.
You're obeying the small commands, well, good, good for you. Keep doing that, but don't neglect the bigger commands. At the heart of Christian obedience is a heart of mercy.
[10:32] A classic example of mercy is the parable of the Good Samaritan. In Luke 10, 25 to 37, Jesus tells this story of a man who is mugged by a band of robbers, and he is left half dead.

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But what good luck for him, because a priest happens to be walking by, a minister of the temple of God. And he sees the man, and after seeing the man in need, he decides that he's going to walk around on the other side.
But never fear, because there comes another person and he's a Levite, someone who ministers in the temple as well, assists the priests. If a priest is equivalent to a modern-day pastor, the Levite is equivalent to a modern-day deacon or worship leader.
Surely he'll come and help this person in need, but again, the Levite sees the person, and he says that he walks by on the other side. But then, in comes a Samaritan.
He's an unlikely hero of the story because the Jews despise Samaritans, because they view them as religious heretics, ethnic half-breeds, and political traitors.
[11:41] And yet, the Samaritan is the one who cares for the man and goes the extra mile. He puts him on his donkey, brings him over to an inn, attends to his wounds, and pays for his stay there until he can fully recover.

And then Jesus asks his hearers, after telling his parable, which of these three, the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan, do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? And a lawyer responds, the one who showed him mercy.
And Jesus says to him, you go and do likewise. The priest and the Levite in those days were the ones who were responsible for offering sacrifices in the temple.
And yet, they were the very ones who in this parable failed to keep the weightier matters of the law.
This is serving in that way as cautionary tales of what Jesus just said in Matthew 9, 13, I desire mercy and not sacrifice.
So let's ask ourselves, in what ways do we honor God with our lips while our hearts are far from him? In what ways are we keeping the less important commands but neglecting the more important commands like being merciful?
[12:57] I hesitate to use this example because I do want to encourage you all to show up to worship on time. However, if you are more concerned with showing up to church on time than with being merciful to your spouse and kids, if you are irate and punishing toward them when running late to church, then you are neglecting the weightier matters of the law.

If you are more concerned with theological minutiae than being merciful toward the people who disagree with you theologically, if instead of correcting them with gentleness and mercifulness, as it says in 2 Timothy 2, 25, you are haughty and you're demeaning in your discourse with them, then you are neglecting the weightier matters of the law.
If you are so invested in pursuing justice or certain social or moral issues that you run roughshod over people and you guilt-truth them and you cancel them and you ruin the reputation of anybody who stands in your way, then you are neglecting the weightier matters of the law.
Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. We can flesh out this picture of mercy by looking at the example of power excellence, of God himself.
This is what Jesus told us to do in Luke 6, 36, be merciful even as your father is merciful. Two different Hebrew words in the Old Testament are often translated as merciful in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.
[14:36] And they are sometimes in alternate translations rendered gracious or steadfast love. Grace and steadfast love. Again, they're related words with the word mercy.

The two terms, the words merciful and gracious occur a dozen or so times together, paired together in the Old Testament. And they invariably describe God.
God is the one who is gracious and merciful. We find this meaning in the Hebrew word for steadfast love and grace.
Let's look at a few examples from the Old Testament where it describes specific actions of God that flow from and stem from his merciful nature.
It says in Nehemiah 9, 17, that even though the Israelites refused to obey God and they stiffened their necks, meaning they got stubborn instead of letting God direct them, they stiffened their necks and resisted him.
[15:36] God, it says, was ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and did not forsake them.

Because God is merciful, he was ready to forgive. He did not forsake them. 2 Chronicles 30, verse 9, enjoins Israelites who have strayed from God to return to him.

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And how does he try to motivate them to return to him? He says, For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you.
Because God is merciful, he does not turn his face from us when we return to him, even after we have sinned against him and have strayed from him. Jeremiah 3, 12 says, Return, faithless Israel, declares the Lord.
I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the Lord. I will not be angry forever.
Because God is merciful, once again, he will not look on in anger at us forever.
[16:41] He relents in his anger. In spite of our manifold sins and our repeated sins, God, right now, loves us still and forgives all of our iniquity, rebellion, and sin.

And what do you call a God like that? We call him merciful. Isn't this so different from the picture that we have of God sometimes? Maybe you walked into church today with guilt, shame, dread, weighing down upon your soul.
Do you fear that God will abandon you? Do you fear his angry countenance? Do you fear that you are now beyond the pale of his mercy?
You can rest assured Lord, you are not because God is full of mercy. He is ready to forgive. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him.
He will not be angry forever. This is an amazing truth. But we also must not misunderstand this precious truth that God is merciful does not mean that he is an indulgent or permissive father.
[17:53] Our God is also the consuming fire. He is the thrice holy God. Sometimes I think we as Christians can have an imbalanced or skewed view of God.

Sometimes we overemphasize love and mercy to the neglect of truth and righteousness or the vice versa. Much like how a toddler colors their coloring pages. You know, like, I like blue so everything is blue or I like pink so everything is blue and it doesn't stay within the lines either.
And it's only as they mature as artists that they learn to color in nuances and shades and contrast and use complementary colors.
Likewise, as we mature as Christians we learn to appreciate and delight in and worship the fullness of God's glory and character. the King James Version renders Psalm 85 verse 10 this way.
Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. That's what God is like. And it looks then that means that's what it looks like for us to be merciful also.
[19:03] Taking our cue from God being merciful does not mean that we never seek or enforce justice or righteousness. Once again 20th century Welsh pastor that I've been quoting in every sermon in the Beatitudes so far.

I know some of you guys have started a book club to go through the studies in the Sermon on the Mount by D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. I cannot be more proud of you guys. It is started by a Welshman nonetheless.
And he writes in his book there are so many people today who think that being merciful means to be easygoing not to see things or if we do see them to pretend we have not.
That of course is a particular danger in an age like this which does not believe in law or discipline and in a sense does not believe in justice or righteousness. The idea today is that man should absolutely be free-minded that he has the right to do just what he likes.
The merciful person many people think is one who smiles at transgression and law-breaking. He says what does it matter? Let's carry on. He is a flabby kind of person that's that word again easygoing easy to get on with to whom it does not matter whether laws are broken or not who is not concerned about keeping them.
[20:13] Only a person who upholds righteousness can be truly merciful. Let me explain. Showing mercy to sinners and forgiving sin is hard work and sometimes it's painful work but being permissive towards sinners and condoning or ignoring sin is easy and it's painless.

I read a remarkable concession from a New York Times columnist named Nicholas Kristof this weekend. His article was entitled We Thought We Were Compassionate But We Were Too Permissive.
He writes As a good liberal I used to oppose arresting people for using drugs. They need health care not handcuffs I thought. But then to my surprise and dismay I found myself praying that my old pal Drew Goff would be arrested.
Drew 40 years old was homeless using fentanyl and also selling it. His wife who was with him was pregnant and had overdosed 27 times including twice in a single day. It seemed only a matter of

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time before Drew killed himself or one of his customers.
So Drew's mom and I confided to each other our hope that he would end up in the relative safety of prison and get treatment there. It's the only way to save his life his mom said wearily. And in the end Drew himself agreed.
[21:26] Drew's most recent tumble into addiction came in part because of a permissive liberal culture toward drugs on the west coast. This was meant to be compassionate but it almost killed him and has killed many of my other friends.

You see being merciful and compassionate is not the same thing as being permissive and indulgent. Maybe you're really good at overlooking the sins of others but maybe you're too good. Maybe others sin against God actually don't grieve you at all. maybe you don't actually care about sin. If that's the case you are not merciful.
You're permissive. You're not compassionate. You're not compassionate toward sinners. You are complicit with sinners. Psalm 119 136 says this My eyes shed stream of tears because people do not keep your law.
It's only people who mourn sin who can truly be merciful toward sinners. How then do we simultaneously pursue justice and righteousness but also be merciful?
[22:43] I don't think we can come up from Scripture a rigid rule that we can apply to every situation every single situation. I think the answer is to mingle justice and mercy according to Scripture informed and Spirit led discernment and wisdom.

Let's think of some specific examples. Do merciful employers ever fire incompetent and delinquent employees? Of course they do.
If they didn't then they would not be good managers and the company would suffer. They would not be faithful in their work and they would not meet their goals and the company would cease to be a public service. But merciful employers might give that employee another chance.
that employer might use what is in his or her power to help the employee to grow and improve and perform better. Do merciful parents ever discipline their children their disobedient children?
If they are obedient to the Scriptures yes they will but they're not going to be hardened disciplinarians. They'll have a merciful posture. They're not going to punish every offense nor be harsh with their children or provoke them to anger as it says in Ephesians 6.4.
[24:02] They will be firm yet gracious. They will teach and uphold righteousness and yet they will also show mercy to their children so that they can represent God to them. God who is described as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort in 2 Corinthians 1.3.

Do merciful pastors ever excommunicate unrepentant church members? Yes, but they will not excommunicate members for every little sin nor will they be hasty to excommunicate church members.
If they are merciful they will patiently endure evil they will exhort and entreat earnestly! And if there is still unrepentance they will excommunicate with tears.
Do merciful police officers and lawyers and judges ever prosecute and sentence people. Of course they do. If they didn't we'd have a lawless society.
But if they are merciful they won't press every single case. Some of you guys have been pulled over for speeding. I know this because it comes up in the children's ministry vetting process.
[25:16] I will not make it public to anybody. but when you do sometimes you have gotten a ticket from a police officer but maybe other times you got pulled over and the police officer just gave you a warning and didn't give you a ticket and let you off.

It's happened to me before. You received mercy. A judge in court has to give everyone equal justice under law but he must be impartial and unbiased but if he is merciful he might use his discretion sometimes when he has the latitude to lessen the sentence reduce the fines or dismiss a minor charge particularly when the defendant is repentant or it's a first time offense where there are other extenuating circumstances.
Sometimes we're going to give people what they deserve. That's justice. Other times we're going to spare people what they deserve and that's mercy.
The Bible does not give us an exhaustive list of do's and don'ts about how to be merciful in every single circumstance and I think that's for the better. Notice how the fifth beatitude is phrased.
Like the rest of the beatitudes it speaks not primarily of what we do but of who we are because if we are merciful then we will show mercy and we will know how to respond in the situations that come to

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us because we have been transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ from the inside out.
[26:54] I've already shown my hand here by saying that but with having defined what mercy is let's not talk about how to become full of mercy. Again like the other beatitudes this is not something that we can attain apart from God or apart from Christ.

These are all divinely wrought and spirit born traits their spiritual virtues enabled by God and here's the key to becoming merciful. Ephesians 4.32 says be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.
How do we cultivate mercifulness kindness tender heartedness forgiveness by receiving first God's mercy in Jesus Christ.
He forgave us. You see this again in Colossians 3.12-13 put on then as God's chosen ones holy and beloved compassionate hearts or merciful hearts kindness humility meekness and patience bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another forgiving each other.
The list very closely resembles the beatitudes right? Meekness humility compassionate hearts mercy and the key to obeying that command again it says later in that verse as the Lord has forgiven you so you also must forgive.
[28:18] Once again it's by receiving and remembering the mercy of God that we become merciful people. We find this principle all over the New Testament in 1 John 4 it commends us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ but how do we love our brothers and sisters in Christ?

It tells us in 1 John 4.19 we love because God first loved us in this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.
Beloved if God so loved us we also ought to love one another. The greatest mercy that God has ever shown us is in the sending of his only son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins.
We have all sinned against God. We have all had pride in our hearts. We have made ourselves gods and lords over our own lives rather than submitting to God and worshipping God.
In political terms we call that treason rebellion. God could have condemned us for our sin and he could have damned us for eternity in hell and that would have been justice.
[29:28] That's what man would have done in his place. But praise be to God that he is God and not man because instead when he saw us in our sin and in our misery his heart welled up with pity and he had compassion on us.

God says in Hosea 11 8-9 my heart recoils within me my compassion grows warm and tender I will not execute my burning anger I will not again destroy Ephraim for I am God and not a man the Holy One in your midst and I will not come in wrath.
It's like man to be vindictive and vengeful it is like God to be merciful. Instead of coming in wrath what does it say in Luke 1 7-8 describing Jesus' coming as the sunrise the sunrise visited us from on high why?
Because of the tender mercy of our God the tender mercy of our God you have all heard and know and love Ephesians 2 4-5 but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved.
It's God's tender mercy his wealth of mercy richness in mercy and his great love that's the reason God sent Jesus' only son to die on the cross for us to redeem us from death and what did we bring to the table?
[31:05] We brought no worth no merit it doesn't say that God made us alive together with Christ while we were sincerely pursuing him and trying to please him no it says that God made us alive together with Christ even when we were dead in our trespass that's why it's mercy remember our definition to be merciful is to have compassion for the needy in disposition and deed if we in some way deserve to be saved it would not be mercy it would be merit salvation then would be a reward and a wage not a gift but it turns out salvation is a gift it's a grace and it's a mercy some years ago there was a famous recording artist who claimed to have been converted to Christianity and I along with many of you were very excited about it it was getting a lot of media attention but then in one of the interviews he said that because he is worth three billion dollars and because he's the number one

Google search brand in the world that God was showing off and showing out by saying that oh he works for me he belongs to me he didn't understand mercy and you can see now from the way he has turned around from that confession God saved him because he's so great and he wants to

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show off his latest acquisition that is so far from the biblical mindset contrast that with what Paul says in Philippians three he says that every reason he has for confidence in the flesh things that he might boast about that it's all rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord he says same Paul says in first Timothy 1 16 but I received mercy for this reason not so God can show off about what a great person Paul is now he belongs to me
I received mercy for this reason that in me as the foremost of sinners Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life the reason why he received mercy Paul says is so that God might show how patient and merciful he is to save a chief of sinners in other words God saved us not because we're trophies but despite the fact that we're trash trash isn't that what rubbish is trash refuse dung that's all that we have to offer to God in our flesh the church is not Jesus's trophy wife it's the whore that was redeemed by the mercy of God God saves us not because we're amazing but because he is amazing not to showcase our merits but to showcase his mercy and when we remember how much we have been forgiven how much mercy we have received it makes us merciful and forgiving toward others there's so much mercy we've talked about and we've only talked about God the Father he says of Jesus in Hebrews 2 17 18 therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people for because he himself has suffered when tempted he's able to help those who are being tempted what makes
Jesus a merciful high priest what makes Jesus a merciful high priest who intercedes on our behalf and advocates for us that he was made like us in every respect he took on human flesh he walked on the earth he suffered he wept he was tempted and that's why he's not callous or indifferent to our sufferings and struggles he's compassionate and he's merciful we read this from the assurance of pardon in Hebrews 4 we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin let us then with confidence draw near to his throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need what gives us confidence to approach God's throne confident that we're going to receive mercy there and find grace there we have a high priest who mediates for us who sympathizes with our weaknesses because he has been made like us in every respect
Jesus gets us Jesus knows us Jesus sees our tears Jesus has lived on this fallen and broken world Jesus knows our struggles he knows how hard he can get and because he shares our human nature he has compassion on us so so much that even as he is being crucified being killed unjustly he prays and pleads with his father on behalf of the very people who are killing him in Luke 23 34 father forgive them for they know not what they do that's a merciful high priest and that's a wonderful comfort to us who are needy sinners but if mercy is for the needy the promise of Matthew 5 verse 7 seems to contradict that because it says blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy this is my third point who receives mercy is
[37:10] God's mercy reserved for those who are needy those who need mercy or for those who are full of mercy the answer the answer is yes to both first it's the merciful who receives mercy the bible teaches this consistently 2 samuel 22 26 and psalm 18 25 which quotes it says with the merciful you show yourself merciful proverbs 11 17 says a merciful person does himself good but the cruel person does himself harm james 2 13 judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy jesus says later on in matthew 6 14 to 15 if you forgive others their trespasses your heavenly father will also forgive you but if you do not forgive others their trespasses neither will your father forgive your trespasses the testimony of scripture is consistent and clear only those who show mercy to others will receive mercy from god but wait a minute aren't we saved by grace through faith alone doesn't this sound like earning god's mercy with our own mercy isn't that salvation by works and not by grace these are good questions to raise while it is true that merciful people receive god's mercy that does not therefore mean that god's that we merit god's mercy by our mercifulness if that were the case it would no longer be mercy we remember mercy by definition is given to someone who is needy someone who is not entitled to anything or someone who hasn't earned what it is that they receive if we merit mercy then mercy ceases to be mercy it's a contradiction in terms so while mercifulness is a criterion that

God uses in his judgment to decide who will receive mercy in the end it is not the basis for our salvation this is the same tension that runs throughout all of scripture we are saved by grace alone by God's grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone but on judgment day it says all over

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scripture that we will be judged on the basis of our works how can those two things both be true! Because those who are saved by God's grace through faith always bear fruit in keeping with repentance because true faith is always accompanied by good works our mercifulness is the evidence the proof and the fruit of our faith in Jesus Christ alone of the fact that we have truly received!

God's mercy as I mentioned earlier we become merciful by receiving God's mercy we love because he first loved us we forgive because he first forgave us we show mercy because he first showed us mercy and those who have received God's mercy are so transformed by that mercy that they become merciful and that's why mercifulness is the criterion that God uses to dispense his final judgment his final mercy on that judgment day it's a cascading waterfall of mercy mercy from God to us and mercy from us to others and then again mercy from God to us to those who have shown mercy we find a perfect illustration of this in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew chapter 18 verse 23 to 25 Ed preached a wonderful sermon on us if you missed that I encourage you to find it on our website and listen to it in the parable there is a servant who owes a king 10,000 talents one talent was about 6,000 denarii and one denarius was a day's wage for a common laborer so if you do some math minimum wage in

Massachusetts is $15 an hour that times an 8 hour work day is about 120 a day 120 times 6,000 because it's 6,000 denarii is 720,000 so one talent is 720,000 times 10,000 that's 7.2 billion dollars it's it's a staggering unimaginable amount of money this servant owes the king 7.2 billion dollars and he has no means understandably to repay this debt and so he and his wife and kids are all about to be sold into slavery which is how they dealt with unpaid debt in those days but then the servant falls on his knees and implores the king have patience with me and I will pay you everything and the king has compassion on the servant and he shows him mercy by forgiving this is amazing the entirety of that 7.2 billion dollar debt but when this servant finds one of his fellow servants so they're equals it's not even king to the servant!

[42:15] twelve thousand dollars he seizes him chokes him demanding immediate payment and when that servant pleads with him in the very much the same way that he earlier pled with the king saying have patience with me he has no mercy and he throws his fellow servant into prison!

And when that event is reported to the king the king summons this unmerciful servant and says to him 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 and then the unmerciful servant gets thrown into prison and Jesus concludes the parable by saying so also my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart so here's the principle forgiven people forgive people those who have received mercy show mercy to others why was this servant so unmerciful toward his fellow servant why was he so impatient to get his money back it's like somebody is breathing down his neck getting demanding repayment from him remember what he said to the king have patience with me and

I will pay you everything this servant is still living like he needs to repay everything he's not living in light of the fact that his staggering debt has been fully forgiven no wonder he's breathing down the neck of his fellow servant saying demand payment that's Jesus' point why is our forgiveness of others our mercifulness toward others the criterion by which God judges us in the end because our merciful toward others is the true test of whether or not we have really entrusted ourselves to the mercy of God whether or not we really have true faith are you living today like you still have this insurmountable debt do you live like you have to pay

God back sure you know your theology in your head we're saved by grace not by works we're saved through faith alone and deep inside your heart but deep inside your heart do you feel though that you have to earn God's favor somehow by your obedience that you have to by your obedience pry mercy out of God's reluctant hands if so then you are not going to be merciful toward others because merit is the name of your spiritual game and you're going to judge others the same way you imagine yourself being judged by God remember Jesus is a merciful high priest because he was made like us in every way he knows us our weaknesses and sufferings and struggles and we have that same benefit when it comes to the way we treat our fellow sinners our fellow servants around us we're like them we have been there we know that weakness we have sinned so when we find ourselves in a position of power over someone who has sinned against us and when they are finally in our hands and it is within our rights to avenge ourselves do we see ourselves in the place of that fellow sinner as ones who have already received!

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mercy from God it is the mercy of God that melts our hard hearts and makes them merciful so the intention of this teaching by Jesus isn't for us to go home now and say am I being merciful enough am I merciful enough today do I have enough mercy am I going to receive mercy in the end that's not the point because by trying to become more merciful like that you're not going to become more merciful forget the requirement for mercy because the requirement that has been satisfied by Christ on the cross is what makes us merciful so relish that mercy you have received from God receive freely and fully that mercy every single day because God says his mercies are new every morning because surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life psalm 23 6 says [47:14] God's mercy will follow you to every place where you have sinned and to every place where you have been his mercy will follow you and you receive mercy mercy mercy you can trust God to take care of the rest that you will become merciful and that you will receive mercy in the end as you 20 21 says but you beloved building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the holy spirit keep yourselves in the love of God that's how we persevere till the end keep yourselves in the love of God keep yourselves!

in the mercy of God waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life if we keep ourselves in the love and mercy of God then we will be merciful and we will receive mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life let's pray together father we don't want to lose the sense of wonder before your mercy amaze us again with your mercy melt our hardened hearts with your mercy and help us give us eyes to see your mercy which follows us everywhere we go every single day that every single day we become more more characterized by mercifulness thank you God you are merciful thank you God in Jesus name we pray amen through Thank you.

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