

ST. ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH

SARASOTA, FLORIDA

STUDY NOTES FOR SAKLC CONVERSATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES OF JESUS

FEBRUARY 18, 2016

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF MERCY”

(Matthew 5:7)

[SEVERAL COMPARATIVE TRANSLATIONS]

(GREEK) - μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

(NRSV) - “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.”

(GNT) - “Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!”

(CE) - “Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.”

(MSG) - “You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.”

(AMP) - “Blessed [content, sheltered by God’s promises] are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.”

REVIEW and QUICK INTRODUCTION to today’s session:

1. Jesus did not speak haphazardly as he gave the Beatitudes – they are presented in a definite progression and logical order.
2. **Beatitudes 1-4** discuss the *attitude* of those in the Kingdom of God; they deal with who we are in relation to God; what God brings to us.
 - a) ...poor in Spirit....Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
 - b) ...those who Mourn....shall be comforted.
 - c) ...those who are Meek...shall inherit the earth.
 - d) ...those who hunger and thirst for Righteousness...shall be filled.
3. **Beatitudes 5-8** talk about our *actions*; they show how it is intended that we are to relate to others.
 - a) ...the Merciful...shall obtain mercy.
 - b) ...the Pure in Heart...shall see God.
 - c) ...the Peacemakers...shall be called sons of God.
 - d) ...the Persecuted...theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

4. Today's focus on Beatitude 5 is about the loss of being judgmental and the development of mercy. Mercy is the very first action; the first order of business. We are to be disposed to mercy because that is how God is disposed toward us.
5. The word *mercy* is not commonly used in our day and age. Many of us are never taught how to be merciful. That's why **Jesus'** instruction here is so important. He defines mercy by his life and death for us and shows God's people how to put mercy into practice.
6. If we operate and act day-to-day on the principle of "*strike hard, strike fast, and show no mercy,*" we've drifted from the heart of God. ***Mercy proclaims whether or not you're living the Beatitudes!***
7. **"SOLA GRATIA" (by grace alone)** was a slogan frequently used by **Martin Luther** and others during the Protestant Reformation. It means that **we are saved only by God's grace and not by any action on our part.** God is the initiator and the actor; there is nothing we can do to earn, or achieve, God's grace!

SHARE GOD'S PEACE WITH OTHERS!

WITH THEM SEEK TO DEVELOP ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. **When is it easy to give mercy?**
2. **When is it particularly hard to give mercy?**
3. **Tell of a time when you (or someone you know) gave – or received mercy; or a time when you (or someone you know) did not give – or receive – mercy.**
4. **Which statement below best describes how you think God sees you:**
 - a) God knows I'm a sinner, but not any worse than anyone else.
 - b) Overall, God would say that I'm doing pretty well.
 - c) God sees me as really sinful; as guilty as a mass murderer.

Explain why you chose the statement you did?

Which viewpoint sees the 'self' in most need of God's mercy?

A) WHAT IS MERCY?

1. **MERCY** (Greek: *eleos*) is not the same as **GRACE** (Greek: *charis*), though they are often found being used together in the epistles.
 - a) **GRACE** is *“kindness bestowed upon one that he has not deserved.”* (Thayer - Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.)
 - b) **MERCY** is *“the moral quality of feeling compassion and especially of showing kindness toward someone in need. This can refer to a human kindness and to God’s kindness to humankind.”*
 - c) Mercy is not an emotion, but our response to human need!
2. Lloyd Jones writing in *“Studies in the Sermon on the Mount”* says, *“The best definition I have ever encountered is this – **Grace is especially associated with men in their sins; mercy is especially associated with men in their misery.** In other words, while grace looks down upon sin as a whole, mercy looks especially upon the miserable consequences of sin. So that mercy really means a sense of pity plus a desire to relieve the suffering.”*
3. *“What makes mercy different from grace? Primarily it is the quality of helplessness or misery on the part of those who receive mercy. **Grace is the love when love is undeserved. Mercy is grace in action.** Mercy is reaching out to help those who are helpless and who need salvation. Mercy identifies with the miserable in their misery.”* (Boice)
4. *“**Meekness is rather a passive virtue; mercy is an active one.** The meek bear; the merciful forbear; and, for doing so they shall obtain mercy both from God and from man.”* (McGarvey and Pendleton)

B) HOW MERCY IS APPLIED –

1. In the 3rd Beatitude (Matt 5:5) we saw that the meek acknowledge their sins before God; now we see that those who know that they are sinners are merciful and have compassion on others, for they are sinners too.
2. Jesus is not teaching forgiveness under pressure –
 - a) We forgive others because we see and regularly encounter people who have been blinded by Satan. (2 Cor. 4:4) – *“**In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**”*
 - b) Our attitude toward others has changed, because for now we have genuine sorrow for our own sins and extend mercy towards those who sin against us.

- c) We forgive, because we have been forgiven (Matt. 6: 14-15) – ***“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”***
- d) Conversely, the Scribes and Pharisees were hard-hearted individuals who were totally devoid of mercy and compassion (as an example see: John 8:2-11) – ***“Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, ⁴ they said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵ Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶ They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.^[a] ⁹ When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, sir.”^[b] And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”***

3. Christianity teaches that we must have genuine compassion toward all people.

- a) The **Good Samaritan** extended mercy to the helpless traveler (Luke 10:25-37) is an excellent example of Christ’s position -
- The priest and the Levite might have had pity for the wounded man, but they did not show mercy to him.
 - The merciful Samaritan made provision for the wounded brother.
- b) Scripture never tells us to “give until it hurts,” but it does teach that we should give until it *feels good*.
- Acts 2:44-45 – ***“All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”***
 - 2 Cor. 8:1-5 – ***“We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; ² for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their***

means, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints— ⁵ and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us.”

4. St. James, Jesus’ half-brother, specifically teaches that **Faith Without Works is Dead**; see James 2:14-19 – *“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren?”*
- a) Why isn’t it enough to simply offer someone “good luck” and “warmest wishes” for the future?
 - b) How do good deeds give evidence of our faith?
 - c) What do our deeds tell us about our salvation?

C) OBTAINING MERCY –

1. The **reward for the merciful is not mercy shown by others but by God himself** (Matt. 5:7)
2. The **principle of reciprocity** is seen in other passages:
 - a. Matt. 6:12 – *“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*
 - b. James 2:13 – *“For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.”*
3. This *quid pro quo* ethic should be taken seriously but not legalistically. Those who are genuinely forgiven cannot help but forgive.
4. Showing mercy toward others does not earn a person entrance into the kingdom; rather, it is a heart attitude that opens a person to receive the offer of mercy that Jesus proclaimed in his gospel about the kingdom.

5. Your facilitator studied some comments made about this passage by two great reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin. The utter simplicity and clear thinking approach of Calvin is the one much preferred. Calvin wrote: ***“Happy are the merciful. The world reckons those men to be happy who give themselves no concern about the distresses of others, but consult their own case. Christ says that those are happy who are not only prepared to endure their own afflictions, but to take a share in the afflictions of others, who assist the wretched, who willingly take part with those who are in distress, who clothe themselves, as it were, with the same affections, that they may be more readily disposed to render them assistance. He adds, for they shall obtain mercy – not only with God, but also among men, whose minds God will dispose to the exercise of humanity. Though the whole world may sometimes be ungrateful, and may return the very worst reward to those who have done acts of kindness to them, it ought to be reckoned enough, that grace is laid up with God for the merciful and humane, so that they, in their turn, will find him to be gracious and merciful.”***

D) SOME CONCLUSIONS:

1. This Beatitude very closely echoes the words of the prophet Micah, with whom Jesus was surely familiar (Mic. 6:8) – ***“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”***
2. St. Paul taught that the result of mercy is that a new creature is formed within us (2 Cor. 5:17) – ***“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”***
 - A tree known by its fruit (Matt. 7:17-20) – ***“In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will know them by their fruits.”***
 - St. Paul prayed that Onesiphorus would be granted mercy (2 Tim. 1:15-18) – ***“You are aware that all who are in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶ May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; ¹⁷ when he arrived in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me ¹⁸ —may the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! And you know very well how much service he rendered in Ephesus.”***
3. If someone is not merciful to his/her fellow man/woman, there can be only one explanation: That person does not understand the mercy of God!

- We must empathize with others in order to be merciful!
- We must understand others in order to be merciful!
- We must provide others with relief in order to be merciful!
- Nowhere do we imitate God more than in showing mercy. There is nothing in which God delights more than the exercise of mercy.
- To us, sinners, God has shown his mercy by giving His Son to die for us; by expressing His willingness to forgive and save us; by sending His Spirit to renew and sanctify us. Every day, every hour, every moment, we partake of His undeserved mercy. All the blessings we enjoy are proofs of His mercy.
- Our world is full of guilt and woe, which we may help to relieve; and, every day we have opportunity by helping the poor and wretched, and by forgiving those who injure us, to show that we are like God.

SO.....HOW WOULD YOU SHOW MERCY IN THESE SITUATIONS?

- 1. Your new neighbor has been difficult from the very beginning...He/she has now had an 8-foot stockade fence erected just a few inches from your property line, effectively blocking the coveted view of Sarasota Bay adjacent to which your home is located?**
- 2. Your sexually promiscuous granddaughter has discovered that she is pregnant. Rather than turning to her parents, she wants your help?**
- 3. A worshipper @ SAKLC has been observed stealing from the offering plate?**
- 4. A seemingly affluent single mom in the church, tells you “in confidence” that she can’t make ends meet. Her car has just broken down and she can’t get to work?**