

Mercy in short supply?

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Sermon Audio file

MERCY: IN SHORT SUPPLY?

Jools Holland / Louise Marshall – Seven Acts of Mercy

1607 Painting by Caravaggio – depicts the seven acts of mercy. An angel at the centre top with an outstretched open hand depicts the transmitting of Grace. This emphasises that mercy is inspired by divine presence and flows through human action. We struggle on our own; we need God to enable us to show mercy and be forgiving.

MATTHEW 18 v 21 – 35 The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

This passage underlines what makes believers very different in the way in which we speak about or expose the sins, flaws and faults of others. Eph_2:10 for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

10000 talents 1 talent = 20 years wages for a labourer. (Lifetime debt)

100 denarii 1 denarii = a day's wage. 3.5 months wage.

Peter's 7 becomes 77, in Judaism 3 times was sufficient to show a forgiving spirit, but not 4! So Peter with 7 thought he was doing well! True disciples of Jesus are to forgive without keeping count – 77. This may echo and reverse Lamech's boast of vengeance in GEN 4 v 24 "If Cain's revenge is 7 fold (God) then Lamech's is 77 fold (Lamech's vengeful passion).

May I suggest that a person with a critical spirit loves to count, but a person filled with God's Spirit enables a person to make forgiving a way of life? (30) Forgiveness is the highest form of showing mercy!

Mercy, which is by nature undeserved, comes to those who receive it as a gift. It is also potentially transformative in nature. We have received undeserved mercy. The assumption that we will, in the light of that show mercy to the undeserving, is a reasonable one. God expects us to be reformed and reshaped by his wonderful gift.

In this story, mercy has no impact; it doesn't reach the inner man! V35 "from your heart"

Mercy describes a divine attribute of God's nature—He is "rich in mercy" ([Ephesians 2:4](#)), and His "mercy is great" ([2 Samuel 24:14](#)). Mercy has so many different descriptions, that several Hebrew and Greek words are used to express the dimensions of its meaning, words like compassion, lovingkindness, favour, and steadfast love often appear in Bible translations to illustrate the idea of mercy. A brief biblical definition of mercy is "the gift of God's undeserved kindness and compassion."

On a human level, mercy is the benevolent or compassionate treatment of someone suffering or in need. Mercy is an attitude that moves us to act on behalf of those in need. On a divine level, mercy is the foundation of forgiveness expressed in God's pardon of human sin. By His divine quality of mercy, God

remains faithful to His covenant promises and His relationship with His people despite their unworthiness and faithlessness ([Deuteronomy 30:1-6](#); [Romans 9:15-16, 23](#); [Ephesians 2:4-9](#))READ.

Mercy and grace are evident in the salvation that is available through Jesus Christ. We deserved judgment, but in Christ we receive mercy from God and are delivered from judgment. In Christ we receive eternal salvation, forgiveness of sins, and abundant life ([John 10:10](#))—all gifts of grace. Our response to the mercy and grace of God should be acceptance and to humbly come and worship with thanksgiving. [Hebrews 4:16](#) declares, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Our hearts are changed. Forgive from the heart v 35.

We linger at the cross and we live in the light of the cross. We will do to others what has been done to us on the cross.

Get our lives in order – PRAY - MT 5 v 7 forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Unforgiveness grieves the Holy Spirit. Psalm 40 v 12 “my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see;” Sin blinds us to mercy. Unforgiveness grieves the Holy Spirit!

See from the other person’s perspective – Luke 23 v 34 “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”

Pause before responding – Luke 6 v 38 “give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. You can be selfish in this!

Have an attitude of gratitude – Matthew 5 v 7 “blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy”. Whatever ‘they’ have done to you, it is nothing to what we have done to God. God hates ingratitude; the unmerciful servant was an ungrateful man. He didn’t appreciate what the king had done for him. “Do this in remembrance of me”

Do not put a foot in the enemy camp. The enemy has no mercy or compassion. Ephesians 6 v 6 “not by way of eye service, as people pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,” – a bond servant doesn’t have ‘rights.’ We demand our rights when we use words like ‘Justice’ and ‘Vindication’ and this can lead us to be open to an enemy attack (2 examples). “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you,”

James 2 v 13 “mercy triumphs over judgement”

In 1940, when Winston Churchill became prime minister, he forgave his bitter opponents for the sake of the greater victory in WW2. “Of this I am quite sure, that if we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future”

The Cross of Jesus was a horrible miscarriage of justice. Never let it become an unappreciated norm in our lives.

We do not earn our forgiveness; Jesus achieved that for us on the cross. But your willingness to forgive is evidence that you have understood and received God’s forgiveness.

Forgiven people forgive. Show mercy!

Here I am humbled by Your Majesty
Covered by Your grace so free
Here I am knowing I'm a sinful man

Covered by the blood of the Lamb

Now I've found the greatest love of all is mine
Since You laid down Your life
The greatest sacrifice

Majesty, Majesty
Your grace has found me just as I am
Empty-handed but alive in Your hands

Here I am humbled by the love that You give
Forgiven so that I can forgive