



*"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).*

### **Introduction**

The Lord Jesus Christ founded His ministry basically on the beatitudes which He delivered during His sermon on the mountain. The beatitudes comprise some of the most emphatic teachings by Christ about the requirements and prerequisites for admission into the Kingdom. The order and sequence in which the beatitudes are represented is essentially, intentional and implicational as each one leads to the following one which is in turn the product of the one before.

*"And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain 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 they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you".* (Matthew 5:1-12).

The first and last beatitudes are followed specifically by the expression "*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" stressing the need for starting the journey with poverty of spirit. This poverty of spirit will produce grieving sorrow over sin and Godly contrition that result in meekness. This meekness will be worthy of the dispensation of Grace. As a result, a contrite heart will be granted the virtue of mercy which is the fifth in the order of the eighth beatitudes. In addition, meekness and humbleness prepare the ground of the heart to accept rejection, persecution and revilement and subsequently obtain the Kingdom of heaven.

## **Mercy**

Mercy is one of those beatitudes. The epitome of mercy is St. Mary. Her life witnesses several incidents of her merciful heart. Tradition records that she used to distribute her food among the poor; and her merciful heart was the one to notice the

need for wine at the wedding of Cana; taking a quick action that was not yet within the time frame of the ministry of our Lord. Yet because of her, He complied and performed His first miracle.

Four questions need to be dealt with while discussing the topic of mercy:

*1) Where does mercy come from?*

The gift of mercy comes from God Himself. "*...for He is good! For His mercies endure forever*" (1 Chronicles 16:34). A merciful heart is one which has experienced grievance over sin, acceptance of chastisement with compliance and contrition without complaint or defensiveness. As a result God turns this heart into a tender one. Becoming "poor in spirit" has nothing to do with poverty in or lack of resources. It has to do with the acknowledgment of our voidness and the hunger and thirst for Righteousness and for the work of the Holy Spirit in changing and transforming us. A merciful person is loved by everybody and His teacher is Christ Himself who said "*...learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,*" (Matthew 11:29).

*2) What is the definition of mercy?*

Mercy is a state and product of a loving heart. A synonym of the word "mercy" is "lovingkindness". In the Old Testament God expressed His love and

mercy through His prophetic word to Jeremiah, *"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."* (Jeremiah 31:3). A loving heart generates mercy and a merciful heart is prompted by love. Love and mercy are inseparable. Because God is primarily merciful, He stresses the importance of mercy and gives it priority even over sacrifice. Three passages from Scripture reveal the Lord's view on mercy.

- **Sitting with tax collectors and sinners.** *"As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."* (Mathew 9: 10:13). Here our Lord is directing the people's attention to what is most essential and He wants

them to go and learn what had already appeared in the Old Testament Book of Hosea 6:6 concerning mercy. He wants them to know that if they were to offer Him sacrifices void of mercy, He would be more pleased with merciful acts than with sacrifices. The Lord likened their love to the morning dew on grass which appears only for a short period leaving behind love-depleted rituals. While the Lord saw a spiritual need, the Pharisees saw a ceremonial fault in his sitting among the sinners and tax collectors. Enslavement to trivial matters of ceremonial cleanliness while neglecting works of love and mercy is abhorrent to the Lord. Such repelling acts are still present among Christians who strive to fight over relative organizational precepts while neglecting the absolute ones which are love and mercy.

- **His warnings against hypocrisy.** "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*" (Mathew 23:23-24). There should be a special guard against bringing up a

generation of hypocrites who pay strict attention to rules and regulations void of love. We should be able to differentiate between God's biblical absolutes ("the weightier matters") and human rules and regulations which are relative and subject to scrutiny and change.

- **The Parable of the Good Samaritan.** In an answer to a testing question proceeding from a lawyer concerning the requirements for inheriting eternal life, our Lord answered with a powerful parable concerning who the neighbor is: "*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to*

*him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?' And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:30-37).*

This parable is the best example of love and mercy which did not proceed from the keepers of the law (the priest and the Levi) but came forth from an enemy who practiced genuine love.

### 3) What are the features of mercy?

The features of mercy are typically manifest in the good Samaritan act:

- **Seeing**. The first feature is an eye open to mercy, able to see the suffering and distress of others. The first three passers by although pumped with the law, yet could not visualize the amount of suffering the person was in. Likewise, the rich man whose eyes were wide open to the riches of the world yet was blind to the needs of the man thrown at his door day and night.
- **Responding**. This is a feature quite prominent in the Lord's ministry on earth. "He had compassion on" was the Lord's response to whomever He saw in need of a miracle.

- **Acting**. The Good Samaritan took wide steps and went the extra mile in helping the wretched man (Luke 10:33-37).
- **Acting indiscriminately**. The marvelous deeds of the Good Samaritan were directed to an enemy. The Holy Bible says, "*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink;*" (Romans 12: 20).

#### 4) Does mercy contradict with and annul justice?

Justice, by definition is to give a person what he deserves, whereas mercy is to give a person more than what he deserves. This is well illustrated in the parable of the late coming stewards who were paid the same wages as the early ones who worked more hours. It is up to the owner of the vineyard to decide what to give. When deciding where the cutoff point resides between justice and mercy and to avoid bias and partiality, the determining factor is: "What and where is the best interest of the person concerned?" What will help the person grow spiritually should be the ground of decision. Justice should be administered with mercy and vice versa. Justice without mercy is cruelty and mercy without Justice is a license to sin. Justice and mercy met at the cross to carry out Salvation for human kind. "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us*



*all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).*

- **Mercy and the execution of the law.**

Christianity is not against the death penalty. In fact utter mercy is demonstrated in this punishment and three benefits are procured:

- a. Repentance of the culprit and his sure restoration of eternity.
- b. Removal of crime from society and protection of communities.
- c. Restoration and reestablishment of social rules and ethics.

- **Mercy and parental discipline.** The behavior of the Prodigal son's father is a perfect example of the administration of justice and mercy. If the father of the prodigal son continued to send his son food and gifts, he would have perpetuated his wickedness and disobedience. On the other hand, receiving him back with love and compassion was the optimum mercy.

- **Mercy and the church discipline.** While St. Paul did not hesitate to excommunicate the man who committed adultery with his father's wife, he remained concerned about him and did not

rest until he knew that the man had repented and was accepted back in the church.

- **Mercy and business**. In the business world, a manager may discipline or punish an employee but he has to do this with a clear goal in his mind, which is to the best interest of the employee and that of the company. Sometimes even harsh discipline, like firing an employee, is needed to teach him a lesson in responsibility. This is the concept of "tough love".

## **Conclusion**

With his prophetic knowledge, David sang to God's mercy and justice. "*Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed*" (Psalm 85:10) with which He reigned and of which He constantly reminded the prophets in the Old Testament until He manifested them practically on the cross when He did not spare His only begotten Son in order to establish mercy and justice on earth and usher us "*...into the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Colossians 1:13). Mercy is one of the beatitudes that our Lord stressed and preached time and time again. Let us continue diligently to purify our hearts from all blemishes through repentance and contrition in order to be able to establish, practice, and preserve mercy on earth and thus find mercy in God's eyes now and in eternity.

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