

Attitude # 5 Merciful

**Jesus said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Matthew 5:7
I humbly ask God's forgiveness for my sinful past.
I am able to forgive those who have hurt me.**

Mercy is the aspect of God's love that causes Him to help the afflicted, just as grace is the aspect of His love that moves Him to forgive the guilty. Mercy is kindness or forgiveness shown especially to someone a person has power over; a disposition to be compassionate or forgiving of others; a welcome event or situation that provides relief or prevents something unpleasant from happening or the easing of distress or pain.

This compassionate treatment of others who are less fortunate than we are, is an expectant part of the Christian's responsibility. To spend a life ignoring the opportunity and responsibility of extending a hand of mercy to others speaks to our neglect of the gratitude of God's mercy on our own lives.

Psalms 103:8 - The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

The Bible has many examples of God's mercy toward man and many examples of man's mercy toward his fellow man. One of the greatest examples is found in the story of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:30-37 - And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

This parable was in response to a question that was asked of Jesus so that He could bring more clarity to His answer. We see in the following verses what took place during the previous portion of His dialogue with a "certain lawyer."

Luke 10:25-29 - And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

We might think correctly that the motive for the question was more along the line of cornering Jesus than it was to get to the truth. Jesus was about to give this man a lesson regarding the way that he does think in comparison to the way that he ought to think. An Israelite would have never considered a Gentile to be his neighbor when it came to equal treatment of him. In other words, they would not have put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile. However, they also thought they should not kill a Gentile if they were not at war with them, but if they saw a Gentile who was in danger of death, they felt no obligation to help save their life. Jesus used this parable to correct his thinking, and ours, when it comes to who our neighbor truly is.

What we can learn from this parable:

In this parable we can see three general descriptions.

- 1. Vs. 30 - What's yours is mine. The takers. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.**

We might think that because Jesus mentions these two places that this story may have very well been a matter of fact. Here we have a man traveling peacefully about his business. Whether these men that he "**fell upon**" were Arabians that made their living by such means or people of his own nation, we do not know. Or they may have been Roman soldiers who lacked the integrity whereby they were sworn; we do not know either. But what we do know is they thought much more of themselves than they thought of anyone else.

I am ashamed to say that I too have been a thief and can sadly relate to both sides of this story. However, having been a thief has never and will never justify being like I was.

Ephesians 4:28 - Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Romans 2:21 - Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

Paul asks two very pointed questions that compel us to take a much closer look within, whereas most of us are much more comfortable when we are looking without. Stealing derives from another rooted sin that in most cases has not been confronted and/or dealt with, the sin of covetousness. To covet means to want or yearn, to have a fervent desire to possess something that belongs to someone else; it is greediness and materialism and is the total opposite of generosity.

The writer of Hebrews spoke regarding the warning of it:

Hebrews 13:5 - Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

2. Vs. 31,32 - What's mine is mine. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

Human nature is very ugly when we see it in plain view. Here we have two men, a Priest and a Levite, who were men one would expect to reflect an even greater character.

Hebrews 5:1,2 - For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

These were men who would have taught others to do the opposite of what they both did. They were men who were supposed to be obligated to mercy and compassion, yet they would not model the same. History tells us that the priests had their residence in Jericho and came up to Jerusalem when they were obligated to serve in the Temple and the Levites were their attendants serving in the Temple as well.

It is likely that they not only saw the man who had fallen among thieves, but they would have also heard his groaning. They saw his wounds; they heard his cry and yet they still thought more of themselves than they did of him. How sad to see men who open the gates of compassion in others and then are seen to shut the gates of compassion in themselves.

3. Vs. 33-35 - What's mine is yours. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

This case brings the act of mercy to another level when we realize that the Jews and the Samaritans were enemies in every sense of the word. Samaria was a nation above all other nations that the Jews despised. We see that the priest had a hard heart regarding one of his own people, but the Samaritan had a tender heart toward one of another people. Though this man was in fact a Jew, he was still a man; and he knew he was to have mercy on him because he knew that he might find himself in the same situation one day too.

Luke 6:31 - And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

What he felt with his heart was extended from his hands. His compassion looked like something; it did not just feel like something. He used his own resources when he bound up his wounds, using wine and oil; wine to wash the wound and oil to soothe it and close it up. He did all that he could to ease his pain, then set him on his own beast and went on foot himself.

Matthew 5:41 - And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

We can be confident that this Samaritan was going upon business, but he would not and could not separate his business from God's business whenever he was given the opportunity to extend mercy.

The conclusion of the matter: Vs. 36,37 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

This parable speaks to the state of every person. It sets forth the example of a loving God toward sinful man. We too were like this man, a traveler; Satan our enemy has left us robbed and wounded. We were by nature more than half dead; we were all dead in trespasses and sins; incapable of helping ourselves out of it. The Law of Moses looks on us like the priest and the Levite and has no compassion and gives us no hope. But then comes Jesus, who does have compassion on us and binds up our wounds.

Psalms 147:3 - He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

He applies His own blood that covers our sin, and He places the expense of our cure to His own account. All of this magnifies the riches of His mercy and leaves us without excuse to be merciful to others like He has been to us!!