

**08<sup>th</sup> February 2017.**

## **THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.III. THE BEATITUDES III.**

### **Matthew 5: 7,8.**

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 5 and we'll continue our study in the Beatitudes, and let's read through the first 12 verses.....

If you've been with us for our study of Matthew, you know that this is the manifesto of the king. Matthew presents Jesus Christ as king and here we hear the king present the manifesto of His kingdom. (Kind of the 8 point programme). Now, we've been saying that this is a twofold presentation. Our Lord is telling the truth about how you enter His kingdom and how you live while you're in His kingdom. Only the poor in spirit enter. Only the mourners enter. Only the meek enter. Only those who hunger and thirst after righteousness enter. And once they enter, they continue to be poor in spirit, mournful, meek, and hungering and thirsting after even more righteousness.

And here we come to the fifth, verse 7: "O the blessedness of the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." I would say again, it's the same twofold thing. In order to be in God's kingdom, you must be one who seeks mercy. And when you are in God's kingdom, you will be one who gives mercy to others. In other words, mercy is also a characteristic of those in God's kingdom, being merciful.

The first four Beatitudes were entirely inner principles. They dealt entirely with an inner attitude. They dealt entirely with what you see of yourself before God. But now, as He comes to the fifth Beatitude, this, while being also an inner attitude, begins to reach out and touch others. There is a manifestation in this that is the fruit of the other four. Where it is true of us that we are broken as beggars in our spirit, that we are mournful and meek and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we will find ourselves being merciful to others as a result of it.

Someone has said, "They who in their poverty of spirit acknowledge their need of mercy begin to show mercy to others. They who mourn their sin begin while they mourn to wash their hearts clean so they are also the pure in heart. And the meek are the ones who are always making peace. And they who hunger and

thirst for righteousness are ever willing to be persecuted for righteousness' sake.”

Do you see how the first four line up with the last four? The first four are the inner attitudes and the last four are the things they manifest. Where there is poverty of spirit and you realize you're nothing but a beggar, you're going to be willing to give to somebody else who's nothing but a beggar, and so you'll be merciful. And where you are mourning over your sin, you will wash your heart pure with the tears of penitence, and you will be the pure in heart. And where you are meek, you will always be a peacemaker, because meekness makes peace. And where you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, you will be willing to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. So we've made a transition now. Now we're going to talk about the character that is manifest when that inward attitude is there in the first four Beatitudes. When you have those first four, there are going to be four characteristics of your character that will be made manifest.

It isn't simply the idea that if you're merciful to everybody, then everybody's going to be merciful to you. That was wishful thinking in a Roman society, as it's wishful thinking in our selfish, grasping, competitive society.

This mercy does not refer to some natural human emotion. It doesn't refer to some sort of earthly operative principle. It refers to a mercy which grows out of a relationship with God. We're talking about a kind of mercy that's operative in God's kingdom, not in man's kingdom. As we saw of the abundance of peace to those that thirst and hunger after righteousness.

Mercy embraces a motive and an action and it is often translated loving-kindness. It does not mean simply to feel sympathetic. It does not mean simply to feel compassionate. It refers to the ability to literally get inside someone else's skin until you think their thoughts, feel their emotions, and understand their pain. It is more than a passing wave of pity. It is an empathizing, it is a deliberate act of feeling their suffering and seeking to relieve it.

Perhaps one way to get at it is to see it in comparison with other words. It is linked to, for example, the word forgiveness. Titus 3:5 says, "According to His mercy He saved us." So mercy was behind forgiveness. Forgiveness is the fruit of mercy. When God looked at us with compassion and affection and

sympathy, when God, as it were, God in our skin, Jesus incarnate, came into the world and suffered all the things that we suffer, yet did not sin, was tempted in all the ways that we are, there was a great sympathizing and He became for us a sympathetic and merciful Savior. Mercy then was behind forgiveness. In Ephesians 2:4 "God being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions made us alive together with Christ." He saved us because of mercy. Mercy is an attribute of God that led to forgiveness. Mercy is God's sympathy toward the suffering, the outcast, downtrodden, the miserable.

Sometimes we think of mercy as God withholding judgment, and it is. But the reason He withholds judgment in mercy is because He has forgiven our sin. So mercy is linked to forgiveness. But that's only one aspect. There are many more mercies than just forgiveness.

Psalms 119:64 says, "The earth is full of Thy mercies." Genesis 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies." Second Samuel 24:14, "For His mercies are great." Nehemiah 9:19, "Thy manifold mercy." Psalm 69:13, "The multitude of Thy mercies." Forgiveness is an expression of God's mercy, but it isn't the only one.

Listen to Psalm 145:9, "The Lord is good to all and His mercies are over all His works." I mean, you can look anywhere in God's created world and find His mercy expressed. Lamentations 3:22, "The Lord's loving kindnesses, or mercies, indeed never cease for His compassions never fail." And where there is compassion, there is mercy. "They are new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness." Verse 32 says, "He will have compassion according to His abundant loving-kindness." And His compassion is expressed in His forgiveness and much more. All the gifts of grace, all the gifts that God gives us, all the good gifts are expressions of His compassion and sympathy and mercy.

Mercy is also linked, secondly, to love. As I read for you earlier Ephesians 2:4, "According to His great love wherewith He loved us, He was therefore merciful." So mercy flows into forgiveness but out of love. It starts with love, becomes mercy, becomes forgiveness. Love is more broad, more extensive than just mercy.

Grace is another word that plays in to this discussion. Mercy looks at the misery sin produces, grace looks at the sin itself.

God gives grace for our sin and mercy for our misery as a result of sin. Grace offers pardon for the crime, mercy offers relief from the punishment. Grace comes first and renders us no longer guilty, mercy comes second and delivers us from the punishment. Again, mercy and grace are different, they're different concepts but inseparable. Mercy eliminates the pain and grace grants a better condition.

And then there's mercy and justice. They go together. They have to as far as God is concerned, He cannot be merciful if in some way it violates His justice. Mercy, remember when it comes from God, is a holy attitude like all His other attitudes. It doesn't negate His justice, or His holiness. It is not some shallow sentimentality which disregards iniquity and ignores justice. That's a false and unholy mercy which wants to conceal justice. But God in order to be merciful and show mercy had to express His justice, as we all know, and He poured out His justice on Christ on the cross satisfying the requirement of a just and holy God and a just and holy law which had been violated in order that He might be merciful to the miserable sinners who had fallen under judgment for the violation of that law.

So, mercy fits together with forgiveness though its different. It fits together with grace though its different. It fits together with love though its different. It fits together with justice perfectly though it is also distinct. The truth of the matter is, if we got what we deserved we would get judgment without mercy. That's what we would get. We would get judgment without mercy and we would deserve it. In fact in James 2:13 it says, "Judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy." Mercy triumphs over judgment. If you're a merciful person you won't be judged. That's another way of James saying if you are a merciful person because God has been merciful to you...in other words, if you have divine mercy granted to you as a child of God, you demonstrate that you are one who has escaped judgment. Kind of as Matthew 7:1,2 has it as "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." But justice has been satisfied, punishment has been made in Christ. We could say then that mercy is more than forgiveness, less than love, different than grace and not apart from justice.

To sum up our discussion of the significance of mercy we'll define it in some very practical terms. The merciful are willing to be insulted and willing to be persecuted as it comes up later. They are sympathetic with those people who even attack them. They're eager to forgive. They are sympathetic with the afflicted. They are gentle to the weak. They are forgiving to everyone who abuses them. They are considerate of the fallen. They are generous to the poor. They are gracious to the offensive, and so forth. And they remember, of course, that they are the recipients of divine mercy and greatly in need of it, so are quick to share the same.

Man, frankly, without mercy is evil. He's evil. Man without mercy is hostile. Man without mercy is angry and we're seeing it in full view today. But for those of us who have come to God in Christ to receive mercy, we have been called to show mercy, to be compassionate, benevolent, sympathetic when we see others in weakness, misery and need.

Now let's talk about the source of being merciful. The source, basically, is God because, you see, when we come to this fifth beatitude in verse 7 we've had to go through the first four. The people who are merciful are those who have realized their spiritual bankruptcy, mourned over their sin, meekly come before God knowing they offer nothing, and demonstrated a hunger and thirst for righteousness they know they don't possess and only God can grant.

If we want the reality of mercy in our lives from God, there's a path and the path is there in those Beatitudes. God then is the source of this mercy. Ephesians 2:4, "God who is rich in mercy..." Psalm 103:11, "As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." Luke 6:36, "Be ye thankful, merciful as your Father is merciful."

Psalms 136 has all its verses ending.... "For His mercy endures forever." Psalm 62:12 says, "Unto Thee, O Lord, belongs mercy." God is the source. We're not talking here then about some natural human law that operates some principle. We're talking here about a divine work. God is the source in Jesus Christ. As it were, God got inside the skin of man, feeling, seeing as man does. The supreme act of God's mercy was to become man and to show His sympathy and His compassion and His love and His grace and His mercy by dying in our place.

And the sequel in the end, and we'll finish with this, verse 7, "And they shall receive mercy." "They shall obtain mercy." What is that? Ongoing mercy from God. This is not saying you can earn your salvation, you're going to get God's saving mercy if you act merciful. This means that if you have been made into a merciful person and you act mercifully toward others as James 2:13 said, which I read earlier, when you're merciful God will pour out mercy on you. It's not that your acts of mercy are meritorious for salvation, but you shall obtain mercy. It doesn't say you shall obtain salvation, you'll obtain mercy. You'll get mercy. But you don't get mercy from merit or it's not mercy. You can't earn mercy. Mercy is giving you what you don't deserve. God will be merciful to you if you're merciful to others.

Moving to the next Beatitude, in verse 8.....

The subject of purity of heart can be tracked from the beginning of the Bible to the end of the Bible. As one little boy put it, "From Geniuses to Revolution." ! The theme of purity of heart being necessary to see God is something that is vast and infinite. And it draws in almost every single biblical theme.

It is what all the Jews, especially the Pharisees eagerly sought in their practice of the law, as Nicodemus, and the rich young ruler expressed to Jesus.

And it is that question of the heart that Jesus answers in the beatitude. How good does a man have to be? What is required? What is the standard? Here it is in verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." What is necessary in order to see God which is really another way of saying to enter into His kingdom? What is necessary is a pure heart.

That was frankly a shocking statement, for people then like people now tend to measure themselves by their fellow men. And especially the Pharisees loved to do this, to compare themselves with others and thus assess themselves to be better than others and therefore hopefully acceptable to God (The Pharisee and the Tax-collector).

So the Lord answers the question of the people by saying that only the pure in heart will see God's kingdom. Only the pure in heart will know God. Only the pure in heart will inherit eternal life. Only the pure in heart will be saved. For they alone attain God's standard. Matt.5:48 has Christ emphasize it " Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect".

Really this is the key beatitude. Somebody might say, "Well if this is the key one why doesn't it come first? Why do we have all these preliminary beatitudes starting there in verse 3?" Because this is sort of the pinnacle. This is sort of the centerpiece. This is the main jewel and you work your way to it. You start out, as you notice in verse 3, with poor in spirit, recognizing your spiritual bankruptcy. And then you mourn over your condition. And then you are gentle, or better translated meek and humble because of that condition. And then you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. And then you are granted mercy so that you can become pure in heart which is to then have received the righteousness that God requires.

Had the Jews even themselves failed to realize the implications and the facts of the Old Testament, such as Psalm 51:6, "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts?" Or as I quoted this morning, Hosea 6:6, "I delight not in sacrifice but in loyalty, or obedience." Or, "Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart."

They were having an impossible time on the external and couldn't do anything about the inside. In Psalm 24 you have a wonderful picture of this struggle. David is the psalmist and he pictures himself as a pilgrim and he's going to a feast at Jerusalem. From vs. 1.. "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers." Then he asks this question, "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place?" As he moves toward Jerusalem and as he anticipates entering the temple he is stopped, as it were, mentally in his tracks and he poses the question...how am I going to be worthy to step into the presence of God? Who's going to go in there?

And he answers the question because he knows the answer. Not somebody who has kept the law of God perfectly or somebody who has fulfilled all the ceremonial requirements, but rather, verse 4, "He who has clean hands and...what?...a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing." There's the beatitude right there, a blessing from the Lord.

"And righteousness from the God of his salvation." There is imputation. There is justification, the granting of divine righteousness to the sinner. He receives righteousness. He receives blessing.

His hands are clean and he is given a clean heart. You have there justification and you have there conversion, transformation.

Who's going to see God? Who has a right to ascend His holy hill? Who has a right to go into His presence? Those who have been given His righteousness and been cleansed on the inside by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Spirit of God.

You see, the kingdom has always belonged to the hearts that are pure. It has always belonged to those who have been cleansed. And even in Christianity in our time it's not any different. We have those people who have a head religion.

What is the heart? Well obviously it's a muscle. We look at it physiologically. But we see it as more than that. We talk about loving someone with all your heart, that's sort of a strange thing to say. We don't say we love someone with all our kidneys or liver, or thyroid or spleen. I don't know sort of how we landed on that except we've inherited this sort of Hebrew idea. The heart is the source of life cause it pumps the fluid of life through our bodies. The heart is used in Scripture really most commonly to refer to the mind, the thinking part of us. It does involve emotion which is a part of thought, but it's the source of personhood. It's sort of a symbol of our...of our inner person. As we think in our heart...the Bible says...so are we. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." That's the best Old Testament definition of the heart. The heart is that part of us from which all the issues of life arise. Doing the will of God from the heart, that's from the inner person, the inner being. The heart is the source of all the best and worst of us because the heart is really the inside person. The heart, therefore, is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it...said the prophet Jeremiah. In Genesis God said every imagination of the thoughts of his heart...speaking of man...was only evil continually. So the heart is what thinks and feels. The heart is our person, our inner person.

And so what the Lord is saying in this beatitude is before you ever see Me there's going to have to be a substantial change a the core of your being. It's not all about religion. It's not all about the outside. It's all about the inside. It's all about a total dramatic change of the inner person. The problem is right at the heart.

We understand that because that's what we say. We'll talk about a problem and we'll say...Well the heart of the issue is...and what we mean is the very core, the very essence where everything is contained that defines us. That's why David after his great sin, Psalm 51:10 said, "Create in me a clean...what?...heart, O God." I want a clean heart.

So what we're talking about here is people who have been cleansed. Those who have had their insides cleansed. And that's exactly what salvation does, doesn't it?

So what is God looking for? He's looking for people who have had their heart cleaned, who have the core of their nature regenerated. Who have had that old stony heart taken out, that old sinful, rebellious core taken out and placed in a new heart. They've been washed. Jeremiah 32, God says I'll give them one heart and they'll fear Me forever.

God has sought a man after His own heart." You see?

Why? Why does God care about that? And the reply came in 1 Samuel 16:7, "Because man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart."

Who was the man after God's own heart? Well, it was David. And God selected David because his heart was right. David said this in Psalm 9:1: "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart." In Psalm 19:14, David said, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." In Psalm 26 verse 2, David cried out, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me and test my heart." In Psalm 27 and verse 8, "When thou saidst, 'Seek ye my face,'" David says, "my heart said unto thee, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'" You see, it was a man who was ruled from his heart. From the inside.

So God is after those pure motives. And I believe if you're truly a Christian that that motive for purity is really there. And if you don't have that in your heart, I question whether you know God. Because the only people who really see God, the only people who really know God, are those who are pure in their hearts in the sense of a motive that is toward God. Whenever David sinned, it was because he corrupted his motives. He got his motives all mangled.

That's what God is after, pure hearts. And you know that. Jesus preached this. Jesus preached that a man needed to have a single heart, a pure heart in the same sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. He says, in Matthew 6:21; "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Where is your heart? You can't

serve God and money. Singleness of heart was what He had in mind. And this is all through the New Testament. The apostle Paul talks about integrity. James talks about it, James 4:4, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God, therefore draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts."

What are the signs of a pure heart? One, integrity and sincerity. One in whose spirit there is no deceit. In other words, there's a real longing for righteousness, a real love for Christ and for God.

Secondly, a hunger for greater purity. If you have a pure heart it is dissatisfied with present sin because it's against the grain of your new nature.

Thirdly, a hatred of sin. Psalm 119:104 the psalmist said, "I hate every false way."

Fourthly, a love for others who know the Lord...a love for other believers. Love out of a pure heart, 1 Timothy 1:5 says "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from sincere faith."

And I think just one other thought, being preoccupied with God. Living in awe of God, living a worshiping life, longing for His will to be fulfilled, for His glory to come.

I don't think monasticism cuts it. I don't think perfectionism cuts it, either. How do I find my heart made pure? One, know you can't do it on your own. If you want a pure heart, know you can't do it on your own. There's no way. No way at all. Proverbs 20, in verse 9, says, "Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean? I am pure from my sin?'" Who can say that? The answer is nobody. You can't do that. .

Secondly, Acts 15:9 says, "You can purify your hearts by faith." You can't do it by works, but you can do it by faith, by believing. Acts 15:9, "Purifying their hearts by faith," it says. Faith in what? Believing in what? In 1 John 1:7 – and that's kind of the climax to the thought, for there it says, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Now do you get it? You can't do it by your works. It can be done by faith. Faith in what? In the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanses us from sin. You want to be pure in heart? Accept the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Accept what He has already done.

Then lastly and key is what Jesus Christ says in John 15:3, “Now are you clean through the Word.” so if you’re a Christian, stay in the word and pray. Pray and hear the words of Job, who said, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” and there was only one answer that echoes down through eternity. God can. So if you’re asking initially, “How can I be clean?” realize you can’t do it by works. You can know purity by faith. Faith in what? The blood of Jesus Christ shed for you. If you’ve done that and you’re a Christian and you’re still fighting impurity in your life, look to the Word and to prayer.

That's it. It's not hard to define the indications of a pure heart...integrity or sincerity, a hunger for greater purity, a hatred of sin, a love for other believers and a preoccupation with God's glory and God's honor. This is what it is to be pure in heart and these are they who see God. And we'll see next time these are the ones who become the peacemakers.

And beloved, when you are purified in your heart by Jesus Christ, you will see God. He’ll be alive to you and you’ll go on seeing Him. And as you mature, and the more pure you become, the greater the beatific vision becomes.

The more pure your heart, the more of God you see. What a great reality it is. Job said, 42:5 – “I heard of thee with the hearing of mine ear. But now I have seen thee with mine eye.” And you know where he saw Him? He saw Him in trouble. And the psalmist saw Him in creation. And others see Him in circumstances. And some see Him in the hearts of other people, but He’s alive in His world. And you’re not alive to that unless you’ve been purified in your heart. Purity of heart cleanses the eyes of the soul so that God is visible. What a great thought. Do you want to see God? You want to have God alive in your world? For now and forever? Then purify your heart. And there’s an ultimate sense, because someday you’ll see God with real eyes. First John 3:2, “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is in the form of Jesus Christ.” Oh, what a day it’ll be to see Christ face to face.