

Merciful vs. Critical

Matthew 5:7

May 25, 2014

Series title: 2 Roads

Review:

Blessed are the poor in spirit--those who don't make SELF (happiness) the center of their life...

Blessed are those who mourn--who take seriously the awful dilemma of SELF committed to staying central in our lives.

Blessed are the meek--those who turn away from "ME-ness" and move toward God and others.

Blessed are those who hunger ...for righteousness--who are driven to God for the inner change needed to be more caught up with God and others than SELF.

DAY 1: Being critical

1. Human beings are "experts" at being critical. "Why can't she do better?" "If I was running things I'd certainly not do it that way." "I'm not asking for the world. Just a little consideration would be nice."

2. These kinds of statements tumble out of our mouths like an avalanche down the mountain.

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

3. What do you think "mercy" means?

4. Who do you know that is merciful?

5. How is mercy seen in them through their:

a. Actions?

b. Attitudes?

6. How do you do being merciful?

7. Instead of being merciful, it is much easier to be critical. Let's look at two reasons:

a. We enjoy feeling superior, and

b. We falsely believe we deserve way better treatment than we get.

8. What strikes you about being critical?

DAY 2: What is mercy?

Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.

1. What is mercy? Let's start with what mercy does NOT mean. Place a check next to any of the following you usually associate with "mercy."

- Wimpy
- Overlooks almost anything
- "Boys will be boys..."
- "Tolerant"
- Turning a "blind eye" to wrongs
- Letting someone "get away" with doing something wrong

2. Mercy defined: mercy is *not* getting the punishment that we deserved.

3. The quality of mercy is rooted in God, not man.

2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort...

4. What strikes you about the phrase, "*the Father of mercies*?"

5. Let's look at another verse about God's mercy...

Luke 6:36-37 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. [37] "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

6. What is to be our standard of mercy?

7. How does verse 37 amplify on our duty to extend mercy?

8. The verse right before verse 36 is also instructive!

Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

9. What is your understanding, so far, of God's mercy?

DAY 3: Mercy: a parable

1. Extending mercy and forgiving others are difficult things for our fallen human nature. Why is that? Jesus tells a parable to help us see inside ourselves...

Matthew 18:21 (Living) Then Peter came to him and asked, "Sir, how often should I forgive a brother who sins against me? Seven times?"

[22] "No!" Jesus replied, "Seventy times seven!"

[23] "The Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date. [24] In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him \$10 million! [25] He couldn't pay, so the king ordered him sold for the debt, also his wife and children and everything he had.

2. What strikes you about this first debt?

[26] "But the man fell down before the king, his face in the dust, and said, 'Oh, sir, be patient with me and I will pay it all.'"

3. The man is asking for mercy. He has incurred debts that he cannot pay back.

[27] "Then the king was filled with pity for him and released him and forgave his debt."

4. What traits (details) do we see about mercy from this last verse?

5. The story does not have a happy ending...

[28] "But when the man left the king, he went to a man who owed him \$2,000 and grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

[29] "The man fell down before him and begged him to give him a little time. 'Be patient and I will pay it,' he pled.

[30] "But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and jailed until the debt would be paid in full.

[31] "Then the man's friends went to the king and told him what had happened. [32] And the king called before him the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil-hearted wretch! Here I forgave you all that tremendous debt, just because you asked me to—

[33] 'Shouldn't you have mercy on others, just as I had mercy on you?'

[34] "Then the angry king sent the man to the torture chamber until he had paid every penny.

Matthew 18:35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

6. Why do you think the man who had been forgiven a debt he could never pay back, turn around and demand someone else to repay a far smaller debt? List several possible reasons...

DAY 4: "...for they will be shown mercy."

Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.

1. Is there a condition to receive mercy?

Matthew 6:12 Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors...."

2. This verse ends the "Lord's Prayer." What is it we are asking God for?

3. What does Jesus assume we have already done when we ask God for mercy for our sins?

Matthew 6: 14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15] But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

4. The second verse sounds scary. It can "sound" like God is holding a threat over your head. Instead, we are looking at this verse the backwards. If we find ourselves forgiving others, it *demonstrates/proves* that we have already received mercy and forgiveness from God!

5. Here's how one of the greatest preachers put it:

“We proclaim, whether we have received forgiveness or not by whether we forgive or not. If I am forgiven, I shall forgive. None of us has by nature a forgiving spirit. If you now have such a spirit, you have it for one reason only. You have seen what God has done for you in spite of what you deserve. You say, ‘I know that I am truly forgiven; therefore, I truly forgive.’”

- D. Martin Lloyd-Jones

6. What strikes you from this quote?

7. If you find yourself repeatedly having a hard time forgiving others, what question should you ask yourself?

8. Finish today's devotional with prayer. Ask God to confirm His mercy to you, first, and then ask Him to give you a merciful heart towards others.

DAY 5: What keeps us from being merciful?

1. Atheists may belittle the bible as a an old book written by old men, but every atheist I've ever met knows one verse from the bible--and can quote it, with great glee and conviction. Here it is.

Matthew 7:1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged."

2. For some reason, human beings can justify themselves being "critical" of someone else without seeing themselves as "judging" someone.

Matthew 7:2 "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

3. Jesus gives a compelling reason not to be critical of others. People around you will learn to be critical of *you* by how they've watched you being critical of others!

4. Jesus gives an illustration of this principle at the end of Matt. 7:2. What does he mean by the words, "...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you?"

5. Over time people pick up how "picky" you are. If you are picky about the tiniest, little things of others, people will learn to be picky with you.

For example: someone gives a presentation at work. They spent a lot of time preparing, and probably practicing. After the presentation is over several of you go out to lunch (without the presenter). What kinds of statements are being made about the presentation?

___ It was too long

___ Did you see the tie he was wearing?

___ He was just trying to kiss up to the boss?

___ Who was he trying to impress? Not us!! Ha ha ha

6. We are *training* people to use the same "measure(s)" (measuring cups) that we use, like sarcasm, ridicule, picking you apart, focusing on the worst part, impugning the worst of motives. Jesus has some advice for us...

Matt. 7:3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

7. What thoughts are running through your head? Are you "training" family members or co-workers in how to be critical of you? Or, are you making progress in the dispensing of mercy?

8. Ask God to (1) alert to your patterns of relating, and (2) break you of a critical spirit.