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**Teaching: Carlon Tschetter**  
**Series: The Sermon on the Mount**  
**Message: The Merciful**

**Transcribed Message**  
**October 22, 2017**  
**Matthew 5:7**

One of my favorite books, and subsequently it became a movie, is Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. If you've read that book, you probably agree with me it is one of the most amazing novels that has ever been written. The main character in that book is a man named Jean Valjean, and he is a man who just recently comes out of prison and years of hard labor. In doing so, he has a vindictive man who is following him around in hopes of entrapping him again and sending him back to prison all over again. Upon his release from prison, Jean is spending some time in the home of a Catholic bishop and one night he decides to yield to the darker side. He gets up and he goes through the house. He puts a bunch of the valuables into a knapsack and he heads out into the night. That guy who is waiting to find him doing something wrong arrests him and brings him back to the bishop and thinks he's got him cold handed. Well, of course, as the story unfolds, the bishop shocks everybody by saying that Jean not only didn't remember to take the silver candlesticks, but there were some other things he was meant to take before he left. The police leave, not believing that what they had just witnessed was actually the case. Jean encounters the bishop who says to him: You no longer belong to evil. Now you belong to God. He is to go out and he is to be a transformed man. In fact, that is the rest of the story. Jean Valjean goes out into the world being a man who has experienced the amazing mercy of one man to another. His life is transformed and he lives a life of mercy to others.

That is what Jesus says in Matthew 5 that when we do that, we're blessed. In that beatitude, Jesus says blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. This is the fifth of the Beatitudes that we're looking at. This morning we see that showing mercy to those in need is to demonstrate the very heart of God. Mercy is what we've received. It is what we receive every day. It's what we're supposed to give back and do so on a daily basis.

In the Beatitudes, the first part of the Sermon on the Mount, which is the setting that we've taken on for these months, we have in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew's Gospel what we call the blessings, the Beatitudes. We've already said that there's something about the sequence that we want to be aware of. The sequence is important. We have a certain logical order that flows one from the other.

We've also said that Christlikeness is what is on display here. The whole Sermon on the Mount is the life of Christ. This is the way Jesus lived out His life. We really don't need to spend a lot of time asking the question what did Jesus say. We ought to be asking the question what is it that Jesus did. Right here it is. What did He do? He lived a life in complete submission to the Word of God. He lived a life totally under the control of the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what it looks like in our life. We see what Jesus said. We see what Jesus did. We look at His life on display for us.

The last thing I want you to see is the focus is going to shift now with this 5<sup>th</sup> Beatitude. I think it is fair to say that the first four have a more vertical focus. They're looking more at our relationship with God. When we get to the 5<sup>th</sup> Beatitude, it's as if Jesus changes our focus and He begins to help us think about things related to each other. From the vertical and our relationship to God, to the horizontal and our relationship to each other.

We looked last Sunday at that 4<sup>th</sup> Beatitude which is to say that we're to hunger and thirst after righteousness. We're to hunger and thirst after God, which simply means that you're going to do anything that you know pleases God. Just think about that. The 4<sup>th</sup> Beatitude, the last one in our relationship with God, is our heart saying to God I hunger and I thirst as a starving man, as a man without water hungers and thirsts for food and water. That's my heart to do the things that You want me to do. Whatever it is that You want me to do, I'm going to strive to do that. That touches every area of our life. You no sooner leave the 4<sup>th</sup> one and the next Beatitude is what?

The first test of that statement is to be merciful. How are you going to put on display the heart of the 4<sup>th</sup> Beatitude – I'm hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Why is it every day as people of the book you're reading the Bible to see what it is that God wants you to do if you don't do it? Here we come after the 4<sup>th</sup> Beatitude. The very first thing out the gate is we are to be people of mercy. We are to give mercy to people

who do not deserve mercy, which is who? Everyone. Everyone. None of us deserve mercy. It's like the guy who said I have no problem with mercy as long as I'm receiving it. It is when I have to show it to others that I struggle. Who said that? Probably everybody in this room has at some time. We have no problem with mercy as long as we're the recipients, but if we have to be the ones to show it, that's where the struggle comes in. It reminds me of the sign that was on display at a convent in Southern California. The sign read: "Absolutely no trespassing. Violators will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Signed, Sisters of Mercy." It's easy to talk about mercy. It's easy to receive mercy. It's not so easy to give it to others.

Let's look at that this morning. We start by looking at the blessings on the merciful and we need to begin by knowing what mercy is. Let's look at the meaning of mercy. Let's begin with the definition. Let's define what it is we're talking about. The Greek word here is *eleos*. Sometimes people say *eleos* is the opposite of *orgae*, which is anger. So, over here we have anger, which is a lashing out at people, an impatient spirit, someone who has to be dominant and in control of everybody. Over here, you have *eleos*. You have the merciful. You have one who shows mercy. In Greek thought, *eleos* was viewed primarily as simply being an emotion. The Stoics looked at it as if it was some kind of a sickness. The Romans looked at it as if it was a weakness. Jesus and the rest of the New Testament elevated it to being a virtue. In Matthew, 11 times we'll talk about this and we're going to look at some of those here in just a little bit.

The distinguishing mark of mercy though is doing. It's acting. It's more than an emotion. It is certainly is not a weakness. It's not simply a feeling of pity. It is a response to. Let's define it this way: Mercy takes on the burden of others through actions. Mercy takes on the burden of somebody else through actions. God has blessed Covenant Community Church in a lot of ways. One of the ways He has blessed us is with people who have the gift of mercy. I don't know if we have more than anybody else, but when you get to watch people with the gift of mercy step into people's lives and into people's circumstances and do that very thing through the exercise of their spiritual gift, they come alongside somebody who is in need of mercy. They are carrying a burden, a load. It may be physical. It may be spiritual or emotional. Whatever it is, you see somebody

come into their life and minister to them and lift that burden with words or actions of encouragement. It is just a beautiful thing to see.

Mercy is like a lot of other spiritual gifts. You don't just have to have the spiritual gift of mercy to show mercy. In fact, like other things, we're commanded to be merciful whether we have the spiritual gift or not. If you have the spiritual gifts, then you do it much more freely, much more naturally, with much more efficiency and joy, but here is a picture of how Matthew speaks about this matter of mercy.

I just want to read a couple of different accounts to you in Matthew's gospel and in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter and verse 27: "And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying aloud, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David'." They were a couple of guys that obviously had a significant need right in their life. They could not physically see and they called out to Jesus to show mercy to them. In the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter and verse 22: "And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.'" What a burden in this lady's life. She sees Jesus and she calls out to Him. Over in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter and verse 14: "And when they came to the crowd, a man came to Him and, kneeling before Him, said, 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For he often falls into the fire.'" In every one of those instances, what do you have? You have somebody that's carrying a burden of some kind in their life. In each of those instances, you have them calling out for action. They're calling out to Jesus. Jesus clearly sees the need. As He always did, He met that need when He was asked.

Think for a minute with me of the distinction that probably needs to be realized between this idea of mercy and grace. We sometimes use these two words almost interchangeably. In some cases, it almost seems as if they're synonyms. The mercy of God and the grace of God. They flow easily from our lips because they seem as if they're so connected. Of course, they are. But they also are to be distinguished. There is something unique about mercy against grace. In fact, Paul begins his first epistle to Timothy and he talks about greetings in the grace, mercy and peace of God. He does the same thing in 2 Timothy. He does the same thing in Titus. He has something in mind that is distinguishing those two words.

Probably we should think of it this way. When we think of the grace of God, we should probably think of the fact that this is God's love in giving to us what we don't deserve. We think of the grace of God as being God in His love giving us what we don't deserve. For by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourself; it's the gift of God. Grace gives us what we don't deserve. Mercy on the other hand does what? Mercy is God's love in not giving us what we do deserve. In grace we get what we don't deserve. In mercy, God withholds from us what we actually do deserve. So, in a sense grace comes to the undeserving. Mercy comes to those who are in misery, to those who are in some state of helplessness. We know that both of those meet at the cross. They both meet at the cross. Ephesians 2 verse 4: But God. Do you know why verse 4 begins with that adversative "but"? Because the first three verses of Ephesians are underscoring something that we often call the doctrine of depravity, our lostness, our inability to do anything before God that would please Him. Then you get to verse 4 after this description of our need and of our condition and you get to this wonderful beginning to verse 4 and how does it begin? But God... "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved." So he brings both of them together there. God giving us what we don't deserve. God not giving us what we do deserve. The grace and the mercy of God. Two incredible thoughts that the Scriptures put before us.

Let's think secondly of the importance of mercy. The importance of mercy. How would you answer that question? How important is this anyway? What is the level of importance that the Scriptures give to this truth of the mercy of God and our reflecting the heart of God to other people by being merciful? You could say it's an attribute of God. The mercy of God is one of the very attributes of God. You could say it's used hundreds and hundreds of times in the Bible. 400+ times we read of the mercy of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Last week, we talked about the righteousness of God being used 600 times. Well, here the mercy of God is used over 400 times. One of the other ways that you can do that is through a picture. In the Old Testament, when God was communicating to His people about His presence with them, when they built that tent called the tabernacle, then when they later built that structure

called the Temple, the centerpiece of it all in the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant. In that Ark of the Covenant, among other things, there was the law of God. Do you know what covered the Ark of the Covenant? The mercy seat of God. Isn't that a wonderful picture? God was communicating tremendous truth to His people by putting over that Ark of the Covenant, putting over the law of God, the very mercy seat of God, that place that was going to be the covering of sin. This is an incredibly important truth that the Scriptures speak about from beginning to end.

What I'd like to do is to speak to this matter of the importance by answering two questions. First, how does a heart become merciful? I want us to think about the importance of mercy by asking the question how does a heart becomes merciful. I want to go back and I want to speak to the sequence of the Beatitudes. We've noted now for a couple of weeks that the Beatitudes are telling us a story by the very logical order in which Jesus speaks them to us. We begin with poverty of spirit, of brokenness before God, and, my friend, if you don't have that first Beatitude as a reality of your life, it's a nonstarter for the other ones that follow. You never get to the other ones if you don't look into the mirror of your life on a daily basis and have an overwhelming sense of the brokenness of who you are before God. It is only a proud heart that can look into the mirror of the Word and think anything other than what I am is to be in is a place of poverty of spirit before God. When you realize that, then it's a lot easier to grieve over sin in your life.

Do you see how quickly this unravels? If you don't have poverty of spirit, you are not doing any grieving over sin. If you have poverty of spirit, you immediately sense the need to mourn over sin in your life and to live a confessing life. You follow that with accepting the hardships, the difficulties, the trials of life, the things that come our way in the spirit of meekness. Then watch. The emptiness of spirit is followed by what? Hungering and thirsting after righteousness. There is a beautiful flow here that Jesus gives us. The emptiness of spirit is followed by a hunger and a thirst for righteousness to please God. Then what happens? What is flowing out of that righteous desire and the righteousness of our life abounds in our heart that is hungry to please God? Mercy to other people followed by purity of heart and a spirit of peacemaking. I think the answer to the first question is mercy comes from the heart that has felt its spiritual bankruptcy.

We aren't merciful if we don't experience the spiritual bankruptcy. Mercy grows in a heart that is broken and hungering for God. In a sense, mercy grows from mercy. We received the mercy of God and we share that with others. Mercy grows from mercy and until we see our own brokenness and our own need we'll never be merciful to people. When you realize that everything you are and everything that you could ever hope to be is because of the mercy of God operating in your life, then, my friend, you're on your way to becoming a merciful person. I think in answering this question, we first of all are confronted with this matter of how is it that God puts within our own hearts a spirit of mercy towards others.

Then secondly, I want you to think with me about what a merciful person is like. What is a merciful person like? We could answer that question really easily. We can just look at Jesus. We could just say the easiest way to answer that question is to look at Jesus. He was the most merciful person who ever walked the face of the earth. We can look at His life and you would be confronted time after time with the mercy of God flowing out from the life of Jesus. Sometimes it's good to look at the opposite of that. That's what I'd like to do. Turn if you would to Matthew 9. Again we read that 27<sup>th</sup> verse, but this time I want to go to Matthew 9 and I want to get a look at an incident in verses 10 through 13. We're going to see the opposite of what we would see in the life of Christ. We read: "Behold many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when He heard it, He said, 'Those who are well have no need of the physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Here is an illustration of the opposite of mercy. What is the opposite of mercy in this story? The opposite of mercy, surprisingly Jesus says, is sacrifice. Did you note that in verse 13? Jesus said those who are well have no need of the physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, I desire mercy, Jesus says, and not sacrifice. Jesus is quoting from the Old Testament. He is quoting from Hosea 6 and verse 6. We've seen this before. Jesus is pulling from the Old Testament and bringing the truth into the Beatitudes and He does it again here in Hosea 6:6. In Hosea 6:6,

Hosea the prophet is speaking into the lives of the people of God and he's basically saying it looks to me like your love for God and all of your activity is empty and meaningless. It's like the dew on the grass. In the morning, it's here and then it is gone. It is all about outward show. You're just simply interested in other people seeing you do the things that you think you should be doing and there's nothing going on in your heart. Jesus pulls from Hosea 6:6 and He says His desire is that our hearts would be alive to the Spirit, that there would be a passion for the things of God, that there would be a feeling of affection for the things that honor and please God. God is not interested in form and religiosity and outward expression alone and just going through the motions and doing the duties that you think He wants you to do. Jesus is moved with compassion and mercy. He sees people. He is outwardly moved and the world may see those same people as if they had it all together.

Who is He eating with here? He is eating with people who are wealthy and have considerable means in their life. Now, they're ostracized because of who they were. But they had a lot of the stuff that people want and enjoy. It's not as if they were the down and out crowd in this case. They were the upward mobile group. Jesus looks at them and He doesn't see that. What He sees is the brokenness in their life. He sees their enslavement to sin. He sees what other people don't see. All the Pharisees can see is Jesus breaking the religious rules. They get all hung up on the trivial issues instead of seeing the eternal issues that Jesus saw. So often, the opposite of mercy in our lives is born out of the spirit of self-righteousness. One of the great quenchers of the mercy of God flowing through us to others is a spirit of self-righteousness. Consumed with the trivial instead of the eternal.

In Matthew 23, listen to verses 23 and 24: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the way to hear matters of the law." What are the weightier matters of the law? Do you want to take a guess? The weightier matters of the law are justice mercy and faithfulness. "These you ought to have done without neglecting the others." The very thing that Jesus pointed to in Matthew 9. Jesus says don't neglect the weightier matters of mercy. Mercy is not trivial in the eyes of God. It's intensely important.

Let's look at how it's demonstrated. The demonstration of mercy comes to us in probably what is one of the most familiar stories in all of the Bible. It is so familiar that most people who don't have much knowledge about the Bible are familiar with this story. I'm talking about the story of the good Samaritan. It is in that story that Jesus demonstrates for us four specific things that flow out of a heart and a life that is merciful. You know this story well. In Luke 10 beginning in verse 30: "Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw and he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place saw him, passed by on the other side.'" So here we have the religious people of the day, the ones that we would most naturally have thought would've responded, go to the other side. "But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought to an inn and took care of him."

Remember how the story came about? It came about because a guy came to Jesus and wanted to know what it was that he needed to do basically before God for God to be pleased with him. Behind his question is I'd love to love my neighbor, but God, I really don't know who my neighbor is. Jesus breaks it down really simply and says your neighbor is anybody whose need you see whose need you can meet. Then He proceeds to tell the story that we know as the story of the good Samaritan.

Notice these four things just briefly. Mercy sees someone who is in need. Verse 33, the Samaritan saw him. Everybody saw him, but mercy sees someone who is in need. It's possible to look and see people and look right past their need. It's possible to look at people and never really look with eyes of understanding. I think one of the many dangers that we face is that we have so many needs all around us all the time that we just get numb to it. That is the nature of technology and that is the nature of our world anymore. Everything is right there in front of us, almost to the point that we don't see it, or at least we don't see it with eyes of understanding. We're occupied and we're preoccupied. One of the prayers of our heart should be for God to give us eyes to see somebody that's burdened right by us.

Secondly, mercy is moved by a heart of compassion. It begins by seeing. Seeing is linked and it is stirred by compassion. Think of how many times the gospel writers reminded us of Jesus seeing the multitudes, or Jesus seeing somebody that had a great need. Some of the most beautiful language of the Gospels is seeing the heart of our Lord as He encounters these people, of how often His heart was broken even to the point of weeping on occasion when He saw the burden and the need. He was so moved by compassion. You see the need and you're moved by compassion. Jesus would look at them and say they're like sheep without a shepherd.

Thirdly, mercy responds outwardly to relieve the distress. Mercy responds outwardly. The mercy that Jesus is talking about goes beyond seeing and it goes beyond feeling. Those are necessary. They are part of the steps, but there is an external response. There's action that is taken. There are practical steps that are realized as we move to relieve distress. In the story, the man went to him and he cared for him. He put him on his animal. He brought him to the inn. He provided financially for the need that he was going to have. He helped him. You might feel better by helping somebody, but a part of this, as we just step away from the story for a moment, is that in helping people we want to help them in a way that has eternal benefit and temporal benefit. There is a wonderful resource that I know many of you are familiar with and many of you have read called *Helping Without Hurting*. It's a good read for how it is that we can actually help people and not hurt them in our helping. Sometimes we can do things that help people that just make us feel better. It may offer some temporary relief to that person, but in the end it may extend their misery. There's a real wisdom issue as well.

Then notice fourthly, mercy acts without considering the relationship to the one in need. It is easy to respond to somebody who has a burden and a need and they're somebody that we like. That's relatively easy to move into their life and respond to that need. It's easy to respond or easier to respond to somebody who has a burden and in need who is like us. It's easy to respond or easier to respond to somebody who likes us. All of those are true. We like them, they like us and they're like us. That's not what's going on in this story. In this case, there is natural enmity and hostility between the man called the good Samaritan and the guy laying on the side of the road. They are natural

enemies. They despise each other. The story with the woman at the well. The Samaritan woman and even His disciples could not believe that Jesus was speaking to this one who was a Samaritan. What do you have to do with her, Lord? Don't you know who she is? Don't you know what she represents? We don't like people like that. We don't engage people like that. Jesus demonstrates obviously many things in both of these stories. How appropriate is it for us today to consider the fact that a part of the teaching story that Jesus puts before us here in the lesson of blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy, and a part of this story called the good Samaritan, is that we are to engage people whether they like us or not, whether we like them or not, whether we are like them or not. There is an opportunity here to demonstrate the mercy of God in our lives, to move into the lives of people who negate all of those things. They don't like us. We may not particularly like them. They're nothing like us. Those are the people that Jesus calls us to. God uses the church to bring mercy and kindness to a broken fractured hurting world.

What would it be like if as the people of Covenant go out into our communities, into our places of work, into our social settings, into our athletic involvement, into the random encounters that we have with people every day. With people we don't know. People who aren't like us. Maybe even people who don't even like us. We bring to them the mercy of God. God, help me to see people as You do, even those who may have wronged or hurt me. What is Jesus saying? Briefly, the promise to the merciful. The promise of the merciful. They shall receive mercy. That's what is going to happen. They shall receive mercy. What does that mean?

First of all, it is not a promise that mercy is going to be automatically received. We've already said Jesus was the most merciful person who ever walked the face of the earth. He was also one who didn't receive very much mercy from others even though He gave it to everyone else.

Secondly, it's not a system of salvation by works. This isn't Jesus saying you do this and God will reward you for doing it by giving you this. That is salvation. Our salvation is not earned. It is not of our own efforts. It's a grace gift to us. So when Jesus is there to receive mercy, He is not giving us a pathway of salvation. As long as we're merciful, we're going to get salvation in payment and it is not telling us they are always

going to receive mercy back. Here's what I think it is. When Jesus says blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy, I think He's looking to the future because He says, in the future tense, they shall. He is looking to the future.

Do you know where we're going to go to help us find the answer to this question? You know it's that little book in the New Testament – James. Almost every week we talk about how James is the epistle in the New Testament that unfolds the Sermon on the Mount. What does James say? James 2:13 “For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” What does that mean? I think James is reflecting on the teaching in the Beatitudes. I think as he looks forward, he is saying when you extend mercy at the judgment seat of Christ he's talking about a judgment. When is the believer going to be judged? The believer is going to face judgment at the judgment seat of Christ. That is the time at which the believer is going to give an answer for how it is that we lived our life. We're going to give an accounting. He looks ahead to that and there he says we're going to give an accounting.

What do you want extended to you at the judgment seat of Christ? What do I want more than anything else at the judgment seat of Christ? It starts with an M and it ends with a Y. Mercy. What I want from my Lord at the judgment seat of Christ is that I would receive his mercy. Here I believe is Jesus's promise. James elaborates on it. To those, who have in their daily walk with God as a believer and follower of Christ, shown mercy to others, God is going to show mercy. To those who have not been people of mercy, God in His wisdom and in His providence is going to withhold the mercy that He would've freely bestowed. To show mercy to those in need is to demonstrate the heart of God. It is to put on display the heart of God. Mercy is what we have received. Mercy is what we give to each other.

What do we take away? Just this last thought. If you're having trouble showing mercy, what you need is a closer look at yourself and your own desperate need before God. I have to confess to you that as I have studied this for this week, on more than one occasion, God brought to my mind a circumstance...or two...or three. Let's leave it at three. These circumstances were where I wasn't wanting to be very merciful. That truth right there is what the Holy Spirit brought to my mind to help me gain a different perspective. What is it that I would hope to receive that hasn't flowed into my life

because of the mercy of God? The answer is nothing. If I, out of that understanding and perspective, can't open my heart to be merciful to another carrying some burden or some load, then I shall not expect at the judgment seat of Christ that God is going to extend mercy to me as I have not to others.

Let's pray. Father God, we're so very grateful, as we've already seen, that the grace and the mercy of God meet of the cross. Father, I thank You this morning that it is that cross that we look to and it is to the cross that we cling. It is to the cross that we lay claim to Your grace and Your mercy through the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, give us a brokenness of spirit before You so that the mercy of God can flow out from our life to others. Father, if there's anybody here this morning that doesn't know You as their personal Savior, I pray that You would give them eyes of understanding to see their desperate need for the forgiveness of sins that can be accomplished only through what Jesus did and not through what we can do for You. We thank You for that gift. In Jesus's name, Amen.