

“Transforming Mercy” | Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt | October 6, 2019

Matthew 5:7; 18:23-35

Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall have mercy ...

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant **released him and forgave him the debt**. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had **mercy** on your fellow servant, as I had **mercy** on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to everyone of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Genesis 32:3-7; 33:4, 8-11

... God has **accepted** me, and you have **accepted** me ...

Colossians 3:12-15

... **forgiving** each other; as the Lord has **forgiven** you, so you must **forgive**. ...

Introductory Question

Tim read a “modern paraphrase” of the parable with the CFO of a wildly successful tech start-up as the servant who was shown mercy. He pointed out that a ‘talent’ represented 20 years of a day laborer’s wages, meaning that 10,000 talents was an impossibly large debt. He also pointed out that ‘somebody always pays’ – forgiving the debt is not free. *Why is **mercy** at the center of the beatitudes and of the Christian life?*

Background

As the 5th beatitude, **mercy** is the first of the ‘beatitudes of capacity’. In the narrative it represents a dramatic shift from the first 4, in which God blesses us in our need to the last 4, in which we bless others with God-given capacity.

The Service: In *Les Miserables*, Jean Valjean is convicted of stealing bread and serves time in prison. Upon his release, he falls into temptation and steals silver from a bishop who had taken him in. He is caught and confronted, but the bishop shows **mercy** by refusing to condemn him, saying “You no longer belong to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I buy.” In the story, Jean Valjean goes on to show **mercy** to all sorts of people he encounters. When God shows us **mercy**, he implants **mercy** in our lives, that we may show **mercy** to others. “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*” [Gal. 2:20]

The Warning: It is impossible to experience God’s forgiveness without becoming transformed into one who shows **mercy** for others. This is not a *condition* of receiving God’s **mercy**, but it is a *necessary* consequence. If we do not let it flow to others, it will drive us to self-righteousness and legalism. But as we show **mercy** to others, we immediately see our own need for **mercy** more clearly, pointing us back at the first 4 beatitudes. The more clearly we see our desperate need for God’s grace in the midst of our disappointment in this world, the more we will identify with those who need to be shown *our mercy*.

Discuss:

- 1.) *How do we answer the initial question, Why is **mercy** at the center of the beatitudes and of the Christian life?*
- 2.) *What is the difference between ‘conditional’ and ‘consequential’ **mercy** as contained in the warning?*
- 3.) *How are we prone to self-righteousness and legalism as we fail to show **mercy** to others?*
- 4.) *What is one area of your life that best reveals God’s **mercy** toward you? And how can meditating on that help you to show **mercy** to others?*