



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

The Sermon on the Mount - Part 1 • the joy of complete forgiveness • matthew 5:7 • 05/27/2018

Main Point

If the blood of Jesus Christ is good enough to satisfy the Father in relation to my sin, then it should be good enough to satisfy me in all my relationships.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the difference between mercy and forgiveness? Explain.

Do you struggle more with forgiving others or admitting you need to be forgiven? Why?

The concept of mercy is at the very heart of Christianity because it's a key attribute of God's character. He's merciful. He showed us mercy in Christ and forgave us our sins. Without understanding mercy and forgiveness, we can't grasp the ongoing power of the gospel to transform lives. Yet we often don't realize the moments when we ourselves need to show mercy to others, and we often don't recognize times when our actions are wrong and require mercy from others. Many conflicts within the church and between Christians are rooted in our inability to show mercy and forgive. And when we don't forgive, our spiritual growth is stunted.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Watch video session 6, in which Colin explains the significance of mercy and forgiveness for our spiritual growth.

As Colin mentioned in the video, mercy is a stepping-stone toward forgiveness. We all want to get to forgiveness, but we can't get there without exhibiting one of God's family traits: mercy. God is able to forgive us because Christ's sacrifice has made atonement for us. As soon as we begin the process of repenting of our sin, God's forgiveness is waiting for us.

Discuss the kind of forgiveness shown to us from God. How often do you think about the fact that God has shown you mercy? Does His forgiveness of you affect your behavior toward others? Why or why not?

What makes it so difficult sometimes to show mercy toward others?

| have a volunteer read matthew 5:7.

Forgiveness is difficult. We all want to be forgiven for the ways we hurt people, but we find it hard to admit that we need to be forgiven. We also have trouble extending forgiveness to others. Most people want to forgive but don't know how to. If a great wrong has been done to you, you may feel it's impossible for you to forgive. No matter how desirable forgiveness might be, it towers over you like a mountain you can't climb.

In this session we'll explore ways you can pursue mercy and forgiveness. These twin virtues belong together, and it's important to understand the relationship between them. Mercy is broader than forgiveness, but forgiveness goes further than mercy.

Suppose someone wrongs you. To be merciful means you have compassion on them. So rather than return harm, you seek to do them good. Mercy chooses not to repay evil for evil but, rather, to "conquer evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). But forgiveness goes further because it involves restoring a relationship. Mercy, then, is like a stepping-stone to forgiveness. Pursue mercy and you'll get to forgiveness.

When have you received mercy? How did it make you feel, and how did you view the person showing you mercy?

How do you think showing mercy might be a stepping-stone toward forgiveness in your life?

| have a few volunteers read exodus 34:6, nehemiah 9:17, and psalm 86:15.

What do these verses reveal about God's character?

How does God's merciful and gracious character inspire you to be merciful toward others?

How have you portrayed God to those in your sphere of influence?

| have a volunteer read luke 10:30-37.

In what ways did you see mercy on display?

The Samaritan showed mercy to a man who was lying in the road. The wounded man hadn't wronged the Samaritan in any way. Lying in the road, he didn't need forgiveness, but he did need mercy, which the Samaritan gave by binding up his wounds and taking him to a place of safety where he could recover. Mercy is broader than forgiveness, so you'll often have an opportunity to show mercy in situations where no wrong has been done to you and where there's nothing for you to forgive.

What was the cost to the Samaritan for his mercy?

The parable of the good Samaritan would have been a jarring story for first-century Jewish listeners because of the cultural friction between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus' story showed that mercy isn't easy but that God calls us to be merciful even when it's difficult.

To grasp the impact of this parable, you have to understand that Jews and Samaritans hated each other. Though they lived close to each other, they had different cultures and perspectives on religion. When Jews were traveling from Galilee in the north to Jerusalem in the south, they deliberately took a longer route just to avoid passing through Samaritan territory.

Notice verses 33-34. The Samaritan had compassion, or a tender heart, to the man in need. Would you say you have a tender heart toward those in need? Do you take action when you see a need? Why or why not?

What social barriers exist that demotivate us to show mercy?

In what ways have you shown mercy like the Samaritan?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some ways you can savor your forgiveness in Jesus? How will your gratitude toward Him lead you to forgive others?

What would it take for you to be able to gladly, freely, and fully forgive someone who seriously wronged you? How is it even possible?

Pray

Pray and thank God for His mercy and forgiveness toward you. Make a list of people who have hurt you and deserve your compassion. Pray for them by name and ask God to give you a compassionate heart toward them, even if you feel you don't want it.

Commentary

| matthew 5:7

5:7 The merciful are those who relate to others with a forgiving and compassionate spirit (6:2-4; 18:21-35). God will show mercy to the merciful.

| exodus 34:6

34:6. As God began to speak, He twice proclaimed His name “Yahweh” [YAH weh], the name He had earlier revealed to Moses. God had introduced Himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM.” This was the same God who had been with the Israelites’ forefathers, who was with them now, and who would be with them always (see 3:14-15). Although the people might fail to keep the covenant, God never would.

God described His essential nature, listing five of His characteristics. First, He is compassionate. God consistently loves and tenderly cares for His people even when they sin against Him. Second, He is gracious. Despite our unworthiness, God acts to bless and provide for us. Third, God is slow to anger. While God will judge sin and those who consistently reject and disobey Him, He provides opportunity after opportunity for people to return to Him. Fourth, God is rich in faithful love, maintaining loyalty to His people even when their sins strain the covenant to the breaking point. Finally, God is rich in truth. We can depend on what God says because He is completely reliable. We can confidently place our lives and eternal destiny in His hands.

| nehemiah 9:17

9:16-17 In verse 10 it was the Egyptians who arrogantly mistreated Israel, but now the same verb (Hb ziyd) is used to describe the arrogance of Israel’s ancestors (lit “fathers”) against God and His commands, in spite of His care and provision. Their rebellion against God (v. 17) was both deliberate (they refused to listen) and nonsensical in their appointment of a leader to take them back to their slavery in Egypt.

| psalm 86:15

86:15 The psalmist emphasized the positive attributes of the Lord as compassionate, merciful, slow to anger, and great in covenant loyalty and truth. Note the absence of the second half of the formula, which describes God’s wrathful response to sin (Ex 34:6-7).

| luke 10:30-37

10:30-32 The road from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of 17 miles with a descent of more than 3,000 feet in elevation, was a dangerous route through desert country. It had many places where robbers could lie in wait. It is possible that the priest and the Levite... passed by on the other side of the road because they thought the wounded man was dead and they would become ritually unclean by touching him, but it is more likely that they were afraid of being attacked by the same robbers or simply did not want to be bothered with the inconvenience of helping the man.

10:33-35 The Jews considered the Samaritans to be physical half-breeds who had intermarried with foreigners and who were guilty of false worship. For such a sworn enemy of the Jews to show compassion on an injured Jew and pay the expenses of his recuperation, while two Jewish religious officials did not, would deeply humiliate a Jew.

10:36-37 Now Jesus got back to the question with which this story began: Who is my neighbor? His point was that the Samaritan proved he was a good neighbor by his gracious actions toward the man who had been attacked by robbers. It was impossible for the scribe to avoid acknowledging that it was the Samaritan who showed mercy. Jesus' reply to go and do the same emphasized that Jews should love their Samaritan neighbors even as the good Samaritan in the story had acted in love toward a Jew.