

One of my favorite songs by Phillips, Craig, and Dean goes as follows:

Mercy came running
Like a prisoner set free
Past all my failures to the point of my need
When the sin that I carried
Was all I could see
And when I could not reach mercy
Mercy came running to me

It is because God's mercy ran to me in my darkest hour, that hour when I realized that I was hopelessly lost and needed a Savior that that song has caused me to pull over on the side of the road and weep tears of joy and gratitude.

But it is so easy to forget the magnitude of the mercy shown us. And when we forget the measure of mercy God has shown to us we tend to measure the mercy we show to others.

When that happens we would do well to heed Jesus' instruction to the merciless Pharisees in Matthew 9:13. Matthew, a tax collector and outcast, upon being called by Jesus to be a disciple throws a party for all his outcast friends to meet the merciful Messiah. The on looking Pharisees, forgetting their need for mercy, questioned Jesus' disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus overheard the question and answered with a both an explanation ("I came to save sinners) and a command. He told them, "Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice."

So, this morning, in an effort to honor Christ's command and avoid the mistake of the Pharisees, we look at what it means to be ministers of mercy because . . .

Scripture: Matthew 5:7

I. The Ministry of Mercy

A. Mercy's Root

1. God

- a. Mercy can't be fully understood and appreciated unless you have received mercy in its fullness from God
- b. Only one who has met the requirements of the first four beatitudes can be merciful
 - i. The final four beatitudes deal with the outward signs of the first four beatitudes being realized

B. Mercy's Relationships

1. Love
 - a. Mercy flows out of love (Eph. 2:4-5)
 - b. Mercy is always a product of love it is not the only product of love
2. Grace
 - a. Mercy addresses the symptoms of sin while grace addresses the cause of sin
 - b. Mercy relieves the pain while grace provides healing
 - i. Good Samaritan
 - 1) Treating the wounded man was mercy
 - 2) Putting him up in an inn and covering his expenses is grace
3. Justice
 - a. While mercy and justice seem incompatible they are actually related
 - b. Justice gives exactly what is deserved, mercy gives less punishment and more help than is deserved

C. Mercy Revealed

1. Kindness not
2. Accountability not Judgment
 - a. Mercy is not turning a blind eye to sin
 - i. Unconfronted sin results in unresolved sinfulness
 - b. Mercy holds others responsible without crushing them with condemnation
 - c. Mercy offers exhortation and encouragement rather than judgment
 - i. Jesus preached sin and salvation
3. Patience not Frustration
 - a. Mercy recognizes the need for growth
 - b. Mercy realizes growth takes time
 - c. Mercy doesn't take away the standard but it tempers expectations
4. Forgiveness not Vengeance
 - a. A common misconception about forgiveness of sin is that it is excusing sin
 - b. Mercy forgives and moves forward rather than holding a grudge and halting
 - c. Just as we show mercy because we have been shown mercy, we forgive much because we have been forgiven much
 - i. The Unforgiving Steward (Matt. 18)

D. Mercy Rewarded

1. Mercy shown is rewarded with mercy received
 - a. Not from Man
 - i. Self-seeking mercy
 - 1) Showing mercy for the sake of later receiving mercy from man
 - 2) Quid pro quo

- ii. Neither Scripture nor history bear evidence that such is the case
 - 1) Jesus was the most merciful person ever and he received no mercy
- b. From God
 - i. However, Scripture is clear that God shows mercy to those who have shown mercy
 - ii. Reciprocation
 - a) Matt. 6:12, 14-15

As the prophets Hosea and Micah were speaking for the Lord and confronting the spiritual apathy of Israel they delivered the following messages:

Hosea 6:6

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Micah 6:8

He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Clearly, God desires and takes pleasure in his people showing mercy to others. So, are you pleasing God? Are you a minister of mercy? How would those you know and love answer that question?

If you need to be more merciful, now is the time to come and seek the Lord's mercy for your lack of mercy and to ask for his assistance in becoming more merciful.