

# BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

- ***But mercy is above this sceptered sway.***
- ***It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,***
- ***It is an attribute of God himself . . .***



# Most People Think

- Happy are the slave-drivers:
  - for they get results.
- But Jesus said:
- Happy are those ready to make allowances and forgive:
  - They will know the love of God.

# Most People Think

- The God of the OT is a God of wrath and vengeance
- The God of the NT is a God of mercy and grace.
- But in Hosea 6:6, God proclaims:
- “I desire mercy and not sacrifice”
- And in Ruth we find the God of love

# Mercy

- An Attribute of God: "God's mercy is infinite, reaching to the heavens." (Psalm 36:5)
- An Appeal for God's help: "Have mercy on me, O God, in accordance with your great mercy." (Psalm 51:1) "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (Matt. 9: 27)

# The Biblical Concept of Mercy

- 1) To pardon someone in the wrong
- **The LORD, the LORD,  
a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger,  
and abounding in steadfast love and  
faithfulness,  
7 keeping steadfast love for the thousandth  
generation, forgiving iniquity and  
transgression and sin . . (Exodus 34: 6-7)**

# Kindness to Those in Need

- Psalm 86: 15-16
- **But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast  
love and faithfulness.**  
**<sup>16</sup>Turn to me and be gracious to me;  
give your strength to your servant;  
save the child of your serving girl.**

# The Good Samaritan

- What shall I do to inherit eternal life?
- What is written in the law?
- Love God, Love Neighbor
- Who is my neighbor?
- Jesus tells the story, then asks the question "Which of these three proved to be the neighbor?"
- The one who showed mercy
- Go and do likewise

# Compassion

- The Greek word for “Merciful”
- *Eleemoses*
- The Greek word for “almsgiving”
- *Eleemosyne*
- Blessed are those who give compassionately to the poor, for they will be the recipients of God's compassion

# Mercy is Not Pity

- Christian mercy must involve both an inner and an outer response
- Christian mercy reaches far beyond the immediate emotion of sympathy
- Incalculably more important is its goal of breathing life into others, of enabling them to claim their identity and destiny as children of God

# How do we Breathe Life into Others

- **When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself** Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert
- Good intentions are not enough!
- Sometimes we do more harm than good when we are trying to help

# More than Money

- The great strength of this book is a holistic understanding of poverty which teaches that being poor is much more than simply not having money. God created each of us to have four foundational relationships: relationship with God, with self, with others and with the rest of creation. When one or more of these is out-of-place, a person is unable to fulfill that calling.

# Two Types of Poverty

- Standing in the position of the wealthy, we often feel like we know all the answers; that if the poor were just a bit more like us, they would be much better off. But “one of the biggest problems in many poverty-alleviation efforts,” say the authors, “is that their design and implementation exacerbates the poverty of being of the economically rich—their god-complexes—and the poverty of being of the economically poor—their feelings of inferiority and shame.”

# Poverty

- "Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings."
- "North American Christians need to overcome the materialism of Western culture and see poverty in more relational terms."

# Context

- This Beatitude corresponds to the discussion on judgment in Matthew 7
- “Judge not, that you be not judged.”



# The Merciful

- Those who reflect God's acceptance of the unworthy, the guilty, and the ones in the wrong, because the merciful themselves, conscious of their own unworthiness, guilt, and wrong, have experienced God's forgiving and restoring acceptance through the message of Jesus Christ.

# Hebrew Word for Mercy

Hesed "Undeserved-favor"

The Book of Ruth, when Naomi blesses  
her two daughters-in-law

The scandal of the Book of Ruth

Naomi showed mercy

Boaz showed mercy

God shows mercy

# Mercy Defined in Matthew 18

- Peter: “So, Jesus, just how many times should I forgive? Like, seven?”  
Jesus: (thumbs up, gesturing up) “More than that, my friend.”  
Peter: “Ok, like seventeen?”  
Jesus: “Not even close.”  
Peter: “Wait, like twenty-seven?”  
Jesus: “Keep going.”  
Peter: “You’re kidding, right? *Thirty*-seven?”  
Jesus: “Try seventy-seven times.”  
Peter: “But that’s ridiculous! Impossible!”

# Jesus Tells a Story



# African Ritual

- African ritual based on the conviction that "the only way to end grief is to save a life"
- After a murder, the family spends one year in mourning, then the killer is tied up and thrown into a river to drown.
- This is called the "Drowning Man Trial"

# Drowning Man Trial

- The family have to choose—if they let the killer drown, they will have justice, but they will spend the rest of their lives in mourning. If they save the killer from drowning, if they accept that they share a common humanity and that life isn't always just, then their act of saving a life can heal their grief.

# South Africa and Apartheid

- When Apartheid ended, South Africans had a decision to make:
- Would they simply live out the script of every oppressed people throughout history, whereby the oppressed become the oppressors, or could they find a different path that would lead to healing for both oppressed and oppressors alike?

# Bishop Desmond Tutu

- Founded a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission”
- Instead of handing out punishment, the whole purpose of the commission was to give victims the chance to tell their stories, to have their suffering acknowledged, and to confront their oppressors in person. And to give the oppressors a chance to tell the truth about their crimes and seek forgiveness and clemency.

# UBUNTU

- We all share a common humanity
- The only way the human family can thrive is together
- When we look at another human being, even someone who has wounded us deeply, we cannot see an enemy, but rather a fellow human being, a brother or a sister.

# Mercy = Forgiveness

- “Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude.” -Martin Luther King, Jr.
- “To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you” -C.S. Lewis
- “Forgiveness is letting go of the hope that the past can be changed.” --Anonymous

# 70 X 7

- Genesis 4: 18 Lamech, a descendant of Cain
- Vs. 23 "I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold"
- Unlimited vengeance
- Matthew 18: 22—Forgive 70 X 7
- Unlimited forgiveness—unlimited mercy







# St. Paul's Chapel



Sanctuary  
at  
Ground Zero









