

“JESUS ON COMPASSION”  
by Rom A. Pegram (8/4/19)

I am so glad to see all of you here today; we are in the middle of a series called “40 Days with Jesus: A Spiritual Adventure.” And I think it has been! Believe it or not, we are officially half way through this series today. So, when you walk out of here today, we’re on the backside of ‘40 Days with Jesus.’

Each week, we’ve been looking at one of the Beatitudes—the first eight statements Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount where he basically said, “If you want to be blessed, here’s what you’ve got to do!” With that in mind, here’s today’s verse (Matt. 5:7, NLT):

**“God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”**

So, today, we’re here to talk about ‘mercy.’ But, what do we know about mercy? I know it’s hard. I know that much. Mercy, to me (and to many) is like when someone wronged you, and you have this great shot at revenge ... but you don’t take it. That’s what makes mercy hard, doesn’t it? Human nature tells you that if someone hurts you, you should hurt ‘em back! BUT is that what Jesus would say? Someone cuts you off in traffic, and what’s your first response? Someone has the audacity to take your lunch at work ... and then says ‘you’re the one to blame.’ What do you do? You think, ‘Hey, *they* did this to me; now I’m going to teach them a lesson!’ A really good lesson... BUT, what would Jesus say? Here’s our scripture for today, one more time: **“God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”** I know it’s hard; it’s tough. Mercy...

In this series we’re in—‘40 Days with Jesus,’ Jesus is giving us *the keys to living a life God will bless*. And revenge is so short-lived—no matter how good it feels at the moment. But, God’s blessings? There’s a life worth pursuing—for eternity!

Let me tell you some more about the Beatitudes, as a group of Jesus’ teachings. As we’ve said before, there are *eight incredible statements* Jesus makes—8 Beatitudes, we call them. *Four of the Beatitudes relate to our relationship with God*. Then, *four of the Beatitudes relate to our relationship with each other*. And today’s Beatitude ... is all about relating to others. Again, Jesus said (Matt. 5:7, NLT), “God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Jesus is basically saying ... you get what you give. In this case, the blessing is based on ‘the law of return.’ You give mercy; you get mercy. And the opposite’s true: you don’t *give* mercy, you won’t *get* mercy. You reap what you sow ... would be another way of saying it...

Not every Beatitude is like that, but this one is. If you want to receive mercy in your life, you need to give mercy. Another way of putting it would be: If you want to be happy (another way of saying ‘blessed’), you must treat others properly. So, what is the right way to treat people? *Be merciful!*

Mercy, folks, is LOVE IN ACTION! And it’s not a one-time act (like giving away \$5, which you’ve been about this past week). It’s a continuation of that action, day after day after day... MERCY—LOVE IN ACTION—is a way of life for Jesus-followers. I hope and pray this week you’ve been in action with the \$5 challenge to change someone’s

life. What would it look like if that's the way it was every week? It'd look like a life of MERCY... and that's how God lives—how God loves.

Psalms 145:8 (NLT) says, “The LORD is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love”—a description of how God lives and loves. And Jesus says, if you want to be blessed, you need to live the same way. But, how in the world do we know if we're living a life of MERCY? I am so glad you asked! Here are *four (4) marks of MERCY* ... from God's word. So, if I am merciful...

**I'LL BE PATIENT WITH THOSE WHO ARE PECULIAR.** Now, what do we mean by that? Everyone is a bit peculiar, aren't they? Ok, everyone *take just a moment, turn to your neighbor and tell them*: “I'll be patient with you today!” I'll give you just a moment to do that... What a greeting, right?

Folks, I'm just going to go ahead and say it; today, you'll have to be a little patient with me, too! Many have thought I'm a little *peculiar* at times...

But, you know peculiar people. In every life, a few *weirdos* must fall. I mean, sometimes the elevator doesn't go all the way to the top. You know? Many are good eggs ... just a little cracked. You know ... *peculiar people* (and I'm one of those)...

So, what do we do with peculiar people? How do you handle them in your life? Let's start with what the Bible says (1 Thess. 5:14, NLT): “Brothers and sisters... Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.” Wow! Be patient with everyone! What a challenge... So, how do we do that with those we consider *peculiar*?

One of the first steps to being patient with the peculiar is to ... *get to know their background*. Many people are the way they are because of their background. Look at where they came from. Get to know them in that way. Once you do, instead of saying ‘look how far they have to go,’ you may be saying ‘look how far they've come!’

Getting to know someone's background makes us a little more patient, because we look beyond their external behavior and begin to see their internal struggles, pain, and difficulties, in a little different light. Sometimes, *peculiar is about* pain, loneliness, hurt, depression, or anxiety; God says when we look at those characteristics in a person, be patient with them! Paul says to the church at Rome (Rom. 15:7, NLT): “Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.” Have you been a peculiar person? We've all been there, if we're honest. Did God accept you? Yup. So, now God says we should accept & love others too ... in all their peculiarity. Learn to be patient. The next *mark of MERCY*?

**I'LL FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN.** Look, the truth is ... everyone is going to mess up in life; nobody's going to be perfect (Webster's definition)! So, we must learn to forgive...

Folks, when people make mistakes in your life, how do you handle it? Do you rub it in? Or do you rub it out? When people let you down, do you hold it over their heads for the

rest of their life and never let them off the hook? That's called 'holding grudges' and it's, by far, the easiest path to take. It's easy to hold grudges—not so easy to forgive. But, *that's what Jesus calls us to do...*

A young pastor tells a story about the very first church he pastored. A guy came in for marriage counseling. The story goes that he and his wife found out—early on in their marriage—that the wife had done something that was admittedly and clearly wrong. At the time, they'd been married about 7-8 years; so for several years, he'd been holding this against her. He never let it go—didn't even cross his mind. She was repentant, she'd asked for forgiveness, and she'd come so far that she'd even forgiven herself (which is always the hardest!). But over and over again, her husband held it over her head. After two years of this young pastor attempting to counsel them, the woman walked out on her husband. And he never figured it out. He never could figure out why their marriage wasn't being restored. One day, she just left...

There's power in *forgiveness*, isn't there? I tell young couples I'm working with that it's the #1 tool in the marriage toolkit! I also let them know that they'll be needing that tool ... daily. And if you've been married for some time, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Colossians 3:13 (NLT) says, "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." And Paul wasn't kidding! We love to receive forgiveness, don't we? That feels so right. But, giving it? That feels so wrong at times. We don't want to be merciful; we want justice (the world's kind) instead...

I had my picture taken some time back and I didn't like how the picture came out. So I told Jane I thought we needed to take the picture again ... and said, "It just doesn't do me justice!" And Jane turned to me and said, "Rom, you don't need justice; you need mercy!" (I'm kidding, of course...)

If you are to be patient with people; it's not about (the world's) justice. You really don't want 'justice', because God says if you pray for justice for others, expect it for yourself. Folks, I really don't want justice; I want mercy in my life ... and I believe you do too! I also want forgiveness, so I need to be giving that to others. Here's the next *mark...*

**I'LL HELP THOSE WHO ARE HURTING.** If I want to be a merciful person, *I will help those who are hurting...* Look at Proverbs (3:27, NLT) with me: "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it's in your power to help them." Mercy is ... *practical assistance!* There are those around you who are hurting—in your workplace, in your school, in your home, and in this room right now... But when you're feeling sorry for someone who's hurting, you're *not* being like Christ; when you've taken action to help them, *then* you've been like Christ (Christ-like)...

There was a wife who fell down and hurt her ankle. Her husband came in and said, "Oh, honey, I'm sorry you hurt your ankle. I'll be praying for you ... while I'm over here watching television." Now, in my house, that would not go over well; I'm sure not in yours either. Jane would probably want me to take action—to give her something for the pain, help her get around, fix dinner, and so forth; Jane's desire would be 'love in action'...

Look at 1 John 3:17-18 (NLT): “If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.” *Show the truth by our actions...* What does that tell you?

It’s a bit like the New Testament story of the Good Samaritan, isn’t it? That’s what comes to my mind. The guy was beat up, mugged, and left on the side of the road for dead. A couple people saw him on the side of the road and their response was “I just can’t get involved. I’m sorry. I feel pity for this man, but just can’t get involved.” The third guy comes along and *took action!* He picked the man up, took him to the Days Inn, took out his MasterCard and said, “I’m paying for everything! Take care of this person...”

Now, that’s MERCY! Love in action... That’s #3: *Help those who are hurting...* The final *mark of MERCY* we’re covering today, then, is this...

**I’LL DO GOOD TO MY ENEMIES.** This is *the hardest one*, folks; *if I’m merciful, I’ll do good to my enemies!* In Luke 6 (33, NLT), we hear Jesus say: “And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much!” which is close to some of Jesus’ words from last week... Jesus is being a little sarcastic here, I believe; he’s being very biting; he’s saying “Oh, look, you did something nice for your friend; big deal, throw a parade; that’s nothing!” Then, Jesus goes on to say (Luke 6:35a, 36, NLT): “Love your enemies! Do good to them. ... <sup>36</sup> You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.” If you want to be Christ-like, then you have to be merciful (compassionate); do good to those who do evil to you—the opposite of what the world will tell you, for sure!

Folks, this is hard, isn’t it? When we’re dealing with people who are difficult—those who’ve done things to hurt us, or said bad things about us, we have *3 choices* (reactions): 1) *Retribution* – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; that’s retribution. 2) *Be polite*. That’s one of the first things Jesus would say to you: turn the other cheek. Don’t just react; go beyond that. Or 3) *Do good to them*. Take the initiative and do good!

Maybe it’s that guy you can’t stand at work. Maybe it’s that girl who’s constantly criticizing you and is a real jerk. (Hopefully you’re not sitting next to them right now!) But the Bible says you’re supposed to be good to that person. *Being merciful ... is when you return good for evil*. Mercy, folks, is the way God treats people ... including you... MERCY is love in action—regardless!

So, how are you doing on these ‘marks of mercy’? And why in the world are we talking about these ‘marks of mercy’—living them out in our lives? Listen:

- 1) Because God’s shown you mercy (Matthew 18:3)...
- 2) Because you’re going to need mercy in the future (James 2:13)...
- 3) Because it’ll make you happy/blessed (Matthew 5:7, TEV) – “Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!” (Proverbs 11:17)...

My prayer for Trinity is that we'd be the kind of church that freely gives mercy, including forgiveness—a place where people can come, maybe hurting people, maybe people who don't even realize they don't have it altogether, where people can come and receive the mercy of God and the forgiveness of God. That's MERCY. And that's what Jesus is calling us to...