

Spiritual Mountain Climbing – Level Six
“Mercifulness”

Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church
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Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration. To grow...which is expressed in our Connection Groups. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Series Title: SPIRITUAL MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

Premise of Series: EIGHT UPWARD STEPS IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN, BASED ON THE BEATITUDES, LEADING TO A LIFE OF IMPACT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Matt 5:1-12

- 1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.
- 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:
- 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.
- 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.
- 7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.
- 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.
- 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus preaches a sermon which we know as "The Sermon on the Mount", which is also recorded in Luke 6. Here, Christ taught the people, and in His teaching gave the passage known as the "Beatitudes". In this teaching, there are 8 steps given to us which lead to a spiritual summit. We will consider each of these steps in turn, one at a time, to see what we can learn from this sermon to make an IMPACT in our lives for the Kingdom of God.

The word “**Blessed**” in the Greek means (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous — with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions)

THE FIFTH STEP UP THE MOUNTAIN: MERCIFULNESS - The showing of mercy, an attribute of God.

Verse 7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

QUESTION: WHAT IS MERCY?

- **Mercy is not throwing yourself at the mercy of the court drama**

Illus: Perry Mason, Law and Order, Capt Kirk Lawyer show????

THROWING YOURSELF AT THE MERCY OF THE COURT

Mercy. The gift given to the guilty. Mercy is a word you will hear used in the legal system. After the conviction has been made, the jury has unanimously declared your guilt, and the sentence is about to be handed down, MERCY is begged for. Your advocate may say, "We would like to throw ourselves on the mercy of the court. My client is a wife and has three children, we beg for mercy.

Mercy is not found in a state of innocence, nor is it sought before the sentence is sure. When an appeal for mercy is invoked, it is your only hope. There is no prayer that your defense argument will prevail, there is no hope that reasonable doubt will be established. The only hope is that the gavel will not come down with the sentence you have now been declared worthy of, that the judge will show mercy.

- **Mercy is not emotionalism**

To be merciful is far more than to shed tears. Of course, those who are merciful sometimes weep. Jesus certainly did not restrain his tears as Martha and Mary grieved over their brother's death. Another time he looked at the city of Jerusalem and wept over it. There is something startling about this strong man's weeping. Jesus wept. Jesus did far more than weep he gave his life for whom he wept. It is easy for some to shed tears that are meaningless and unproductive. This is emotion without motion and this is not mercy.

- **Mercy is not humanitarianism**

(1 Cor 13:3 NIV) If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Mercy goes beyond handing out used clothes to flood victims or food to the needy. It is possible to give your body to be burned (extreme) and not have love. Acts of mercy that are void of an attitude of mercy are invalid. The mercy of which Christ speaks is far more than the mechanics of doing good.

- **Mercy is not feeling sorry for somebody**

It is not just referring to sentimental feelings. Feeling sorry for someone, being sympathetic, is a good quality, but it does not express the proper depth that Jesus is referring to. In fact, James 2:15-16 teaches us that when we see someone in need and only acknowledge the need, that is, feel sorry for them, but do nothing to help them, we've really done them no good at all.

- **Mercy is not just being kind to someone**

Mercy is also not just helpful deeds. Some people equate mercy with kindness. And although being kind to one another is a Scriptural mandate, once again it does not express the true meaning of mercy. And mercy is certainly not justice. Justice is getting what we deserve. We talk in legal circles about "placing ourselves on the 'mercy' of the court." In other words, we know we deserve a certain punishment but we are hoping that there will be a relaxing of the penalty, a lesser verdict. But even that does not fully explain the depth of mercy, as Jesus describes it.

- ***The Greek word for mercy is “eleos” which means to wash over in purity (canceling a debt), and move from sympathy to empathy, to find a way to help the person.***

The word Jesus uses for mercy is "eleos," and it is full of great meaning. It's used to describe an attribute of God. God is said to be "rich in mercy." (Eph.2:4) Titus 3:5 tells us that we are saved by His mercy. And Peter tells us that: "In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope..." (1 Ptr 1:3) "Eleos," in its root carries the meaning, "to wash over." In the Greek culture, wherein Jesus lived, it was used in the context of "whitewashing" a wall or "wiping out" an impurity or "canceling" a debt. You see mercy goes beyond sympathy to empathy. It is "love in action." You not only wash out the deed that was done against you but, and here is the real challenge, you find a way to help the person. You see mercy is an action, not a reaction. "Eleos," has its greatest meaning in our key word for this beatitude: we are to be forgiving. But even forgiveness can be too weak unless we understand that we not only are to wipe out the injury done to us by another but we are to also help them to recovery. And that's the rub isn't it? It's one thing to say you forgive, it's another to become actively involved in mercy. The word mercy is used some 250 times in the Old Testament. It appears as the word mercy (96), kindness (38), and lovingkindness. It is used 31 times in the New Testament.

- ***The Hebrew word for mercy is “checed” which means to get inside someone’s skin, to look at where they view life and feel what they are experiencing; to move in and act on behalf of the one whose hurting.***

That is exactly what Jesus did when He chose to leave the comfort and glory of Heaven to become one of us. Mercy has also been defined as compassionate treatment, having the disposition to be kind and forgiving.

- **Mercy is an attitude**

It is not something that can turned on and off at will. Mercy, as demonstrated by Christ, involves the way a person truly feels. It is an underlying attitude to life. Mercy is to see others as Christ sees them and feels toward others as he feels toward them. Mercy is to have an attitude of mercy toward everyone. Let's face it, we ALL need mercy when it comes to our relationship with God.

- **Mercy is to feel the pain of another so deeply that we're compelled to do something about it.**

In fact, people in Bible times believed that the seat of emotions was found in the intestinal area. That's why the King James Version uses the phrase, "bowels of mercy."

- **Mercy is love in action**

Mercy is equally action. If we have an attitude of mercy, we will perform deeds of mercy. When springtime arrives it cannot be kept a secret. It expresses itself through blooming flowers and singing birds. (Asthma & Allergies too!!) And when the springtime of mercy is in our hearts, it makes itself known in a multitude of ways. When mercy is translated into action, we are kind and gracious in our judgement of others. We look for the best in others. We ask ourselves. What circumstance led this person to do wrong?" rather than "How can I expose or punish this wrongdoer?" Redemption, not condemnation, will be our concern. Mercy that is action ministers to others. It is one thing to feel mercy and a step further to show it to others. Those who are merciful dare to help lighten the load of another. Mercy that is action forgives others. Perhaps there is no greater expression of love than forgiveness. When you have every right to be resentful but choose to forgive, you bring happiness that only mercy can bring.

- **Mercy is who God is**

Deuteronomy 4:31: "For the LORD your God is a merciful God..."

Ephesians 2:4: "...God, who is rich in mercy."

James 5:11: "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

Luke 6:36, our Lord said, "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father is also merciful."

Mercifulness - The attribute of refraining from harming or punishing offenders, enemies, or persons in one's power; kindness in excess of what can be expected or demanded by fairness; forbearance and compassion; a disposition to forgive or to be kind; kind, compassionate treatment; relief of suffering.

As you can see from the definition, being merciful involves a lot of things which are contrary to the normal, sinful nature of man. It is not natural to refrain from punishing the guilty, our enemies; it is not the natural tendency of man to show more kindness than is expected by fairness. Our natural human tendencies are usually just the opposite of these. We punish, we get even, we withhold kindness, we do not bear long with people, we do not show compassion, we do not show a tendency to forgive, or to provide relief from suffering. Most of the time, we are just too caught up with living our own lives, providing for ourselves, to worry about these kinds of things. However, Christ says that we are to change, and to show the attitudes that He Himself showed.

No particular object of the demanded mercy is specified, because mercy is to be a function of Jesus' disciples, not of the particular situation that calls it forth. The reward is not mercy shown to us by others, but by God. In context here, it is "the meek" who are also "merciful", for to be meek is to acknowledge to others that WE are sinners; to be merciful is to have compassion on others, for THEY are sinners too.

QUOTES:

William Barclay

"Mercy is to get inside someone's skin until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind, and feel things with his feelings; to move in and act on behalf of those who are hurting."

Chuck Swindoll

"Mercy is God's ministry to the miserable."

Chuck Swindoll

"Mercy does not mean only to sympathize with a person in the popular sense of the term; it does not mean simply to feel sorry for someone in trouble. It means the ability to get right inside the other person's skin."

Mark Opperman

"The man who refuses to show mercy destroys the bridge over which he himself must cross."

Robert Schuller

"I urge you to carry out an act of mercy in someone's life this week. Not because they deserve it.... Not simply because they showed you mercy..., but because you want to be more like your Father in heaven, showing mercy to all without favoritism."

"True expressions of Godly mercy should be fluid."

As we continue to climb the mountain today, we must realize the FLOW OF MERCY and how it plays into the success of our climb. There is a FLOW OF MERCY. You may be asking what that means; which is what we'll deal with today.

THE FLOW OF MERCY AS WE CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN

Let's take a look at it from four perspectives.

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Let's take a look at it from four perspectives.

I. The Downward Flow of Mercy: Mercy Offered

-One of the first things we need to know about mercy is that it is available to all people.

Just as **Matthew 5:45** says, *"He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*

God does not reserve His mercy for those who deserve it. In fact, if anyone deserved it, it would not be mercy, but payment or obligation.

-Mercy is showing great concern for someone in need, having compassion, sympathy, or pity. Mercy is used to describe one of God's attributes. Eph.2:4 says He is "rich in mercy." The Greek word for mercy, *eleos*, is used in relation to misery and its relief. Grace is God's free gift displayed in the forgiveness of sins. Grace is extended to men as they are guilty. Mercy is extended to them as they are miserable (ISBE Bible Dictionary).

-Many people do not realize that God's kindness is available to them in the midst of their misery. God has great concern for those in need- esp. those who are suffering. He cares about people who are hurting, and He is willing to help them if they will let Him.

-Some people are experiencing physical misery. They live with physical pain or may be fighting sickness & disease. Some live with emotional misery. They have fears and insecurities and emotional wounds from the past. Some live with the misery of regret over past mistakes. We could talk about spiritual misery, and maybe even the mental anguish and confusion some people live with.

Illus: UMBRELLA – a defense mechanism that we use to hide our pain.

The point we need to see here is that in the midst of what might be a miserable life, we have a God who cares about us and offers His mercy and kindness. The downward flow of mercy is available to all who will close their umbrellas of defense, and let the undeserved and unrestrained kindness of God wash over them.

-That leads us to the next point. The offer of mercy and its universal availability brings no benefit unless it is accepted.

II. The Inward Flow of Mercy: Mercy Received

-When someone asks God for mercy, they are really asking for relief from whatever misery they are in. Mercy is not synonymous with grace, but it certainly relates. I've heard some people tell about how miserable they felt when they became aware of their own sinfulness. As they realized how dark their own heart and life had become without God, they came to a point of crying out for relief. God's relief came in the form of grace and forgiveness that is available through faith in Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross.

-Now, I do not believe that God's mercy is only available to those who have responded to His grace. Remember, He makes His rain fall on the just and the unjust. However, without receiving the free gift of God's grace, mercy may only be a temporary fix. Without forgiveness and a meaningful relationship with God, misery will eventually become perpetual- if not in this life then certainly in the next. But with God's grace and forgiveness, misery becomes momentary.

-As Paul said in **2 Corinthians 4:17-18, 17** *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

-So both those who follow Christ obediently and those who do not may be recipients of God's mercy if they ask. But the favor and blessing of God can only rest on those whose hearts belong to Him.

-Now the central truth of this beatitude is found in these last 2 principles. God's favor and blessing, along with His endless mercies are given to those who habitually show mercy to other people.

III. The Outward Flow of Mercy: Mercy Extended

-Blessed are the merciful.... The merciful are those who not only receive mercy, but who have also learned how to pass it forward to others. Here are four marks of the merciful that will help us see how mercy should flow out of our lives to others.

HOW MERCY SHOULD FLOW OUT OF OUR LIVES TO OTHERS

1. Merciful people help hurting people (divorce, bereavement, abuse, shut-ins, etc.)

James 2:14-17 (The Message)

"Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, 'Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!' and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?"

These are people who might be living in misery or are suffering in some way. When we come alongside them and help them find comfort and relief, we are showing God's mercy to them. Mercy may come in the form of a smile, a handshake, a hug, kind words, a kind act, taking meals to people, pulling someone's weeds, visiting people, praying for them, or alleviating their pain and suffering in a way that values them and honors God. Merciful people help those who are hurting.

2. Merciful people are patient with those who struggle.

Galatians 6:1-2

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

If we've been serving the Lord for awhile, sometimes we can forget all of the times that we have struggled and came up short. Aren't you glad God is patient with you? Let's be merciful and show the same grace and patience for others who are still fighting their way free of the stuff of life or just struggling to keep their heads above water. Help them out. Pray for them. Walk with them! That is mercy!

3. Merciful people are kind, even to their enemies.

Jesus asked in **Matthew 5:46**: *"If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?"*

The question is rhetorical. Jesus wasn't saying that no reward would come. He was revealing one of the truest tests of a Christ follower: How do you treat those who mistreat you? Merciful people will repay evil with good so God will receive the greatest glory and honor.

4. Merciful people are forgiving people.

-Colossians 3:13 says *“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*

-Robert Schuller tells a story about Bernice Schug. He met Schug when she needed work and they hired her as a housekeeper. She was a lovely woman, showering the Schuller's with love and poppy-seed rolls. But he says that no one knew of her hidden hurt. One day she came to Schuller and said, "Bob, I was reading the bulletin and I noticed that you are having a guest speaker next Sunday who was a Kamikaze pilot." Schuller nodded telling Bernice that this particular pilot had a tremendous story about finding Jesus. "That may be true, but my boy was killed in WWII by a Kamikaze pilot and I don't think I could handle it." Schuller understood and told her he didn't think it would hurt her to miss one Sunday. Schuller writes: "The next week the Japanese pilot shared his story. His love and gratitude for Jesus shone from his black eyes. You could feel the love and release he had found. People were moved by his testimony. And when the service was over, I walked with him back down the aisle to the rear of the Church. Suddenly, as we approached the last pew, an older woman stepped out directly in our path. She stood firmly in front of the Kamikaze pilot and blocked his exit. She looked him squarely in the eye and said, "My son was killed by a Kamikaze!" It was Schug. We all held our breath as she continued, "I have seen how God has forgiven you your sins, and tonight, for the first time in 40 years, I've allowed Him to forgive mine. Will you forgive my hatred for your people?" With tears in his eyes the young pilot said, "Will you forgive me for what my people did to you?" She threw her arms around this little Japanese man and they stood there holding each other, both of them crying and crying." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

-One of the reasons why I want to show compassion to others is because God has been compassionate to me! I'm so thankful that my sins have been forgiven! I'm grateful that I have a loving relationship with God through Jesus. I'm so thankful that I don't have to spend eternity in the lake of fire. I'm so grateful for God's mercy in my life that I want to extend that same mercy to others.

-I urge you: Carry out an act of mercy in someone's life this week. Not because they deserve it... Not simply because they showed you mercy..., but because you want to be more like your Father in heaven, showing mercy to all without favoritism.

-If we will allow mercy to flow out from us to others, it will change our lives and many lives around us. This is better than the world's idea Paying It Forward! It's better than building up good karma. Let's look at this last perspective on mercy and the reward that comes from living in the flow of mercy.

IV. The Reciprocal Flow of Mercy: Mercy Rewarded

IV. The Reciprocal Flow of Mercy: Mercy Rewarded

-Merciful people are only merciful because they themselves have received mercy. However, the more they allow mercy to flow in and out of their lives, the more it will be available to them.

-In **Luke 6:38**, Jesus was speaking of mercy and forgiveness, and He said, *“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

-We aren't told specifically who will be doing the pouring, but the source will certainly be upward. God is the God of mercy and will pour out His mercy on those who are merciful. However, as several Scriptures attest, God also moves people to give more mercy to the merciful as well.

-**Proverbs 16:7** says, *“When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.”* I don't pretend to know how God does these things, but I do know that He rewards attributes like mercy.

-Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.

Conclusion:

As we close, we've talked about the downward flow of mercy, where God gives mercy to just people as well as unjust people. He is a merciful God whose nature it is to show mercy. We come to a point today where we need to ask how much of God's mercy have we allowed to flow into us. In turn, we must also examine the outflow of God's mercy from our lives to other people. Our reward and blessing will be a greater capacity to give and receive mercy.

-Living in the flow of mercy – that is a place where God's favor can be found! Today, if you need to ask the Lord for mercy to alleviate some form of misery in your life, I hope you will follow through and do so. If you need to ask the Lord to open up doors of opportunity for His mercy to flow out of you, I know He will hear and answer. As we do this, our lives will be blessed, and we will be able to bless others around us with the mercy and kindness of our heavenly Father and make a greater IMPACT for His Glory!

You Watch... You Wait... You'll See!