

God's Darling Attribute
Matthew 5:7
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

[Editor's note: Sermon preached at the Greenville Camp Meeting, May 1952. This sermon is typical of Padgett's composition style. Some thoughts are fully expressed in sentences and paragraphs; other thoughts are stated in phrases and outline form. We can imagine that some of the stories and thoughts were so often repeated in sermons that he only needed a phrase to prompt him to speak extemporaneously.]

Coming at the beginning of Christ's ministry, the Beatitudes are a celestial stairway over which men may walk from the cold justice and formalism of the law into the warm tenderness of God's grace. Upon first glance we take the Beatitudes as a complete and finished statement with regard to each particular virtue. Each appears to be the last word to be said. Any comment on such choice statements of divine truth would only serve to mar its beauty.

We think, talk, and preach in terms of three blessings. We exhort men to be saved, sanctified, and to be filled with the Holy Ghost. We let it go at that. We seek, pray for, and exhort men to develop spiritually and in character. What do we mean by growing in grace? What do we mean by seeking to be like Christ? What do we mean by going on to perfection? Are there terms we can use to designate such growth? Can we know we are growing? Are there any terms by which we may mark our progress? Can it be obtained like the new birth, sanctification, or the Holy Ghost?

The Beatitudes shed light on these questions. They pin things down, analyze these Christian virtues, and let us know where we are. Each beatitude expresses a state of being or a duality of character. Every one in expressing a state of being gives the natural reward for such achievement. The remarkable thing about these is that they are not inherited. They do not necessarily come with the experience of salvation, but they are Christian

virtues that are obtained by the individual through loyalty and faithfulness to God. They come by wholly following God.

The text states: “Blessed are the merciful.” This involves the universal basis upon which we may expect to do business with God. It is not only on a universal scale. It is individual as well. God allows the individual to call the plays in the game of life. If you would desire mercy from God, you must have that quality in your own heart. Every man who finds mercy in his own heart will find its counterpart in the heart of God.

Individual Responsibility

(a) Individual responsibility of selection

You select your own blessing from God. You elect to receive the mercy of God. This state of being is acquired by diligently following God.

(b) Basis for our selection

God is looking for men who answer to his heart and selects men on the basis of the attitude of the heart. When he looks for man to have mercy upon, he looks first for that quality of mercy in the heart of the man. If he finds it not, he extends no mercy. That is what was in David, something like the heart of God.

(c) God makes the standard and we elect to compete for the prize.

(d) Why did Jesus select Peter, James, and John. Did he love them better? Was he showing partiality? No. Christ found in their hearts the qualities that placed them in these honored positions.

(e) Why did God say, “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated”? It was not the men and their souls that God was talking about. It was a quality of character that Jacob had

and a lack of it that Esau had. Jacob has a conception of spiritual values that God loved. That conception found a response.

The Importance of the Virtue of Mercy

No man can be saved without it.

(a) If the sinner received justice, he would die in his sins.

(b) The mercy seat in the Holy of Holies.

What would have happened if there had not been a mercy seat? The priest would have come face to face with the Ten Commandments and probably would have died before he could confess his sins and the sins of the people. The mercy seat meant that the priest and the people could live and be given another chance.

(c) The law said, "Do and live."

Mercy says, "Live and do."

The law said, "Thou shalt be righteous."

Mercy says, "I will give you a chance to repent."

The law said, "I judge you by what you do."

Mercy says, "I judge you by what you are."

The law saved the good.

Mercy saves the bad.

The law brought the woman to Jesus and said, "She has sinned; let her be stoned."

Mercy said, "He that's without sin among you, let him first cast a stone."

The law found a man picking up sticks on the Sabbath and demands, "Stone him."

Mercy says, "Keep the Sabbath Day holy, but give him a chance to explain his motive, give him a chance to live."

The law saw the man in the ditch, but passed by on the other side.

Mercy comes along and says, “He is in need and that is sufficient for me to help.”

Mercy at Work with the Publican

(a) God be merciful to me a sinner.

(b) The Pharisee said, “He doesn’t deserve anything. He is a sinner. Me, I am a good man and I deserve a reward.” There was the absence of the quality of mercy in his heart and he got nothing for his pains. The Publican had this quality in his heart and it redeemed him.

(c) The debtor in the Bible who cried for mercy and was forgiven. He had a change of heart and went out and would not forgive. This cancelled his own forgiveness. He was then condemned himself and was cast out into fire unquenchable.

Practical Application of Mercy

Merciful to men’s souls – pray and weep over men.

Merciful to their names – never slander or believe slander on another.

Merciful to their estates – what they cannot do, don’t judge.

Merciful to their offences – never remember an injury.

Merciful to their wants – the need of others is an opportunity to exercise mercy.

How may we obtain it? By a close and constant communion with God. We become like those we associate with. We develop the quality of mercy by closely following God. The first flower that grows on the tree of a righteous life is the grace of mercy. We cannot buy mercy at the price of mercy. We cannot guarantee that mercy will be given back to us when we extend it. But mercy cannot come in unless mercy has gone out. We remove every barrier for its incoming when we are the source of its outgoing.

Restatement of the Golden Rule

- (a) Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others.
- (b) Give and it shall be given you.
- (c) With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

The Reward of Mercy

Is it love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance? Mercy is its own reward. All of the others have a subsequent reward; all have a reward comparable with the grace that is stated. But this one is unique. There is no reward for this quality like the possession of it. Mercy is its own reward.

Mercy at the Judgment of God

- (a) We will have no merit to stand on there.
- (b) We will have to depend on the virtues of another and his name is Jesus. If we cannot get mercy there from Christ, we will be lost, hopelessly lost.
- (c) Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.