

Day 23
My enemy is my opportunity!

Matthew 5:7 (NCV) They are blessed who show mercy to others, for God will show mercy to them.

Jesus is flipping the script yet again. Right after He talks about having an appetite for righteousness, He reminds His audience about mercy. Why mercy? Why right here? Mercy because the Pharisees pursued righteousness, and it led them to a self-righteous attitude and a better-than-them kind of behavior. Jesus told the Pharisees, “You tithe of your herb gardens but you leave the weightier matters of the Law, mercy and justice. You place harsh burdens on people without lifting a finger to help them.” **Their pursuit of a so-called righteous life led them to a superficial expression of mercy.**

Jesus does not want our pursuit of righteous living to lead us to a better-than-them kind of attitude. He reminds us that mercy triumphs over judgment, and we have been recipients of His mercy, so we must be distributors of that mercy. When we do that, mercy becomes a never ending stream that flows from Him to us, from us to others; and the more mercy flows from us, the more mercy flows to us...

We cannot allow our righteousness to become self-righteousness. When we become self-righteous, it manifests itself in a lack of mercy. The Pharisees thought of themselves as righteous but, unfortunately, that led them to look at themselves as better than others. They demonstrated this by their repeated lack of mercy towards others. They wanted people stoned, (In John 8, the woman caught in adultery. Notice they only brought the woman; last time I checked you couldn't commit adultery all on your own. I smell a cover up). Instead of showing mercy, they used this woman as a trap for Jesus. So Jesus writes something in the sand (maybe some things they would've liked to be kept hidden) and reminded them that none of them is without sin. They complained every time Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath, which was quite a few times; the man with dropsy that Jesus called to the front; the woman that was bent over for eighteen years. They complained about Jesus healing them on the Sabbath, yet they never lifted a finger to help any one of these people. Jesus reminded them that these people whom He healed were as much children of Abraham as they. So Jesus tells the crowd about the motto of the day: **“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’” (Luke 5:38 NCV)**

There is no mercy in that. You do bad to me; I do more bad to you. Everybody listening to Jesus knew exactly what world they lived in; mercy was very seldom demonstrated. The Romans (the enemy) had very little mercy, if any. The religious leaders' mercy, anybody could do without. So Jesus says, you want mercy, then you must give it. **Mercy is being willing to give to others what they don't deserve. Mercy treats everybody the way that God treats me.** Jesus says, if I refuse to treat people the way He treats people, I would have to face God's judgement and not receive God's mercy. The question we have to ask ourselves: **“Do we want judgment or mercy?”**

The more gratitude we have for God's mercy towards us, the more we will be able to show mercy for others. Before we start patting ourselves on the back, we need to recognize the depth of mercy that God wants us to have. God's mercy, through us to others, manifests itself in very distinct ways.

We must show mercy to those whom we perceive as against us, our enemies. Surely God is on our side and will crush our enemies and give them the due punishment they deserve! After all, these bunch of unsaved Philistines deserve God's judgment. So Jesus, knowing how we think and how the world operates, including the religious world of His day, lays down the gauntlet. He says, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemies.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray**

for those who hurt you. 45 If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on good people and on evil people, and he sends rain to those who do right and to those who do wrong. 46 If you love only the people who love you, you will get no reward. Even the tax collectors do that. 47 And if you are nice only to your friends, you are no better than other people. Even those who don't know God are nice to their friends. 48 So you must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:43-48 (NCV)

Have you ever seen your enemies as an opportunity to demonstrate God's mercy? Jesus did not say, "You have to tolerate your enemy." He said, "You have to love them!" Your love towards them does not depend on what they do to you. In fact, if they hurt you, meaning cause you harm, you pray for them. What? That's called being merciful. If you thought mercy is easy, then you don't understand what true mercy is. **Mercy might be a gift to the one who receives it, but it requires true sacrificial love from the one who gives it.** That's why the world is incapable of true mercy. Jesus says if we demonstrate this kind of mercy to our enemies, we show that we truly belong to Him. His children take on His character and nature and His nature is merciful, especially to the undeserving, which we all are.

Luke adds and says, *"But if you will listen, I say to you, love your enemies and do something wonderful for them in return for their hatred. 28 When someone curses you, bless that person in return. When you are mistreated and harassed by others, accept it as your mission to pray for them. 29 To those who despise you, continue to serve them and minister to them. If someone takes away your coat, give him as a gift your shirt as well." (Luke 6:27-29 TPT)*

Did you catch what Jesus said? *"They hate, we do something wonderful in return for their hate."* When last did you do something wonderful to or for someone after they did something horrible to you? *"They curse; we bless them in return."* Do you curse back or do you speak blessings over them? *"They mistreat and harass; we pray for them."* How many people on your prayer list are people that harass and mistreat you? What are you praying over them? Get even prayers or forgive them and bless them prayers? *"They despise; we continue to serve and minister to them."* How have you served and ministered to the people that despise you? When is the last time you willingly washed the feet of someone who betrayed you? *"They take; we willingly give and even give more than what is being demanded."* What about the takers in your life? What extra gift have you given to someone who only takes from you? Considering Jesus' words, how merciful are you really?

Jesus is not done yet, he ends with this: *"Show mercy and compassion for others, just as your heavenly Father overflows with mercy and compassion for all." (Luke 6:36 TPT)* Our mercy must be a reflection of God's mercy. God's mercy is not partial or play favorites. It is available to any and all who ask for it!

So, loving and giving mercy to those who are against us, is expected of us who say we belong to Christ. If you are thinking, "Well, great. I give this kind of mercy, then surely I will receive this kind of mercy from others!" I hope you are sitting down as you read this because this is not for the faint of heart. Read this carefully and prayerfully.

Jesus did not say if we give mercy to others, then everyone else will give us mercy in return. Every one of the blessings of the beatitudes are given to us by our Heavenly Father when we obey Him. Even though we give mercy to others, it does not necessarily mean that we will receive mercy from others. **We do not give mercy so that man would give us mercy; we give mercy so that God would be merciful to us.** It is wonderful when we receive mercy from others, but receiving mercy from others is not the determining factor of whether we give mercy to others. **We give mercy and forgiveness because of our**

Heavenly Father, not because of our fellow man. The only One who guarantees us mercy is our Father, but that guarantee only comes to us as we are merciful to others, especially to others who do not deserve it.

Your enemies need something from you that they do not deserve; it's called "mercy." If you are willing to give mercy to those who do not deserve it, you are being like your Heavenly Father. On the other side of your willingness to demonstrate mercy to your enemies is a place called "no judgment"; just simply, the Mercy Seat. **Your enemy is your opportunity to receive what you don't deserve because you are willing to give what they don't deserve. Mercy will triumph over judgment!**

Reflection and Prayer:

- **Pray this prayer:** Heavenly Father, I thank You for showing me mercy even when I was an enemy of the cross. Thank you that while I was a sinner, Jesus died for me. By dying for me and being willing to forgive me, You showed me how I should be treating others. Even if those others are people who are against me, people who are my enemies. I want to be like You! Give me the strength and the grace to do what You said I have to do. I want to love my enemies and do something wonderful for them in return for their hatred. Lord, in my flesh that is an impossibility, but all things are possible to him who believes. I believe. Help me to bless those who curse me and not retaliate with angry words. When I am being mistreated and harassed by others, I accept it as your mission for me to pray for them. Lord, I want to be like You. Even in Your darkest hour, You washed the feet of all those who were going to scatter when You needed them the most. Help me not to hold anything against anyone, including those who have betrayed me. But let me serve and minister even to my betrayers. Father, if I suffer loss from what others do to me, let me lean completely into Your mercy and draw from Your deep well of love so that I can give what is needed and trust You for the results. Give me an attitude of gratitude for Your mercy so I can dispense it to whomever and wherever, I go. Father, I know this is not the easy road, but it is the road to the blessed life that only You can give. I am on Your way and I will not turn back. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen and amen!
- **Who do you need to place on your prayer list? Pray for them daily...**