

Day 24
Mercy makes room for miracles!

Matthew 5:7 (NKJV) “Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy!

Mercy for my enemies is not negotiable according to Jesus. It is expected because I carry the Spiritual DNA of my Heavenly Father. Someone has said, ***“If our greatest need was for information, God would have sent an educator. If our greatest need was for technology, God would have sent a scientist. If our greatest need was for pleasure, God would have sent an entertainer. If our greatest need was for money, God would have sent an economist. But since our greatest need is for mercy, God sent a Savior.”***

God’s children are merciful because their Father is merciful. God is full of mercy and grace, so we need to be the same. The challenge is, mercy is easy when I am on the receiving end, but it becomes more difficult when I must be on the giving end. Why? Because it requires some form of allowance, or even loss. I might not get what I think I must have. I might have to be willing to lose something in order to demonstrate mercy to someone. I might not get the justice I think I deserve because I am giving someone else the mercy they don’t deserve. Mercy is not for the faint of heart but for the courageous. It takes courage to be a mercy giver. **Mercy will always require something from me. Mercy demands that I go against my own human nature.**

It is human nature to be selfish; meaning, me first. This me-first attitude shows itself in how we respond to other people’s failures and how we respond to our own failures. **We judge ourselves by our intentions; we judge others by their actions!** When we fail, we will say things like, “I didn’t mean it,” or “That was not my intention,” or “My motive was pure...” When others fail us, we say, “I cannot believe they would do that to me,” or “They call themselves a Christian?” or “I knew they did that deliberately...” Do you ever give people the benefit of the doubt even though everything points in the wrong direction?

Mercy is difficult because mercy is completely opposite to that which is seen in the world. Paul writes about this difference in his second letter to the Corinthians: ***“The world is unprincipled. It’s dog-eat-dog out there! The world doesn’t fight fair.” (2 Corinthians 10:3 MSG)*** It’s a jungle out there! It is all about gaining the upper hand regardless of who I have to push out of the way to get what I want. How does mercy fit into this evil structure? We love the idea of mercy, but we quietly feel that we are going to get run over. “We might lose,” is our unspoken fear. “Sure this is a nice idea with all Christ followers, and maybe my family, but not my enemies!”

So Paul continues: ***“But we don’t live or fight our battles that way—never have and never will. The tools of our trade aren’t for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-6 MSG)***

Mercy is a tool that we have been given to open the door for miracles to happen in people’s lives. We cannot respond like the world and think that it will produce the righteousness of God. This mercy that is given can only be given by those who have experienced God’s mercy themselves. The miracle that took place in my life because of God’s mercy can take place in the lives of those who do not know God

when I become a dispenser of God's mercy to them. Mercy can smash the most indifferent and hateful hearts. **The warped philosophies erected against God's truth struggle to survive in an atmosphere of Holy love and sacrificial mercy. Mercy is a breeding ground for miracles.** That's why God clearly tells us that this mercy cannot be manufactured in a selfish human heart. It can only come through hearts that have experienced that mercy for themselves. We do not give **our** mercy away; we give **God's** mercy away.

We don't get even; we give grace. We don't hurt back; we heal. We don't gossip back; we pray. We don't collect names for revenge--we don't collect names at all--we simply show compassion. We don't critique back; we compliment. We actively look for ways to show mercy to our enemies. We decide to be merciful, not hateful. **We take our lead from Jesus, not from cancel culture. We do not cancel out anyone that Jesus died for; last time I checked, that's everyone.** The Proverb writer says, ***"If you see your enemy hungry, go buy him lunch; if he's thirsty, bring him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness, and God will look after you."*** (Proverbs 25:21-22 MSG) Surprise your enemies with goodness and they will treat you better? Not necessarily. God will look after you when you make room for His mercy in the lives of those who have never experienced His mercy.

Paul quotes this verse in Romans and says, leave the revenge business to God, but do this instead: ***"Instead, if your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."*** **21 Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good."** (Romans 12:20-21 NLT) Mercy is love in action, making our love active. It is not a feeling, emotion or wish. Mercy is an action. **When you act in mercy, you activate God's power and allow the Lord to do what you can never do by taking matters in your own hands. You cannot conquer evil with more evil. You can only conquer it with God's goodness.** When you decide to operate in mercy, you are working with the Holy Spirit to do the miraculous in the most hateful hearts.

Jesus is the greatest example of love in action, but we also see it in the disciples' response to hatred and persecution. One of the most powerful examples we see is in Acts Chapter 7. Stephen is preaching and his audience, the Jewish leaders, explodes in a fit of rage. ***"The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. 56 And he told them, 'Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!' 57 Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him 58 and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' 60 He fell to his knees, shouting, 'Lord, don't charge them with this sin!' And with that, he died."*** (Acts 7:54-60 NLT)

I love these words: ***"But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit..."*** **When you are full of the Holy Spirit, you are full of the character of Jesus and you take on the nature of the Father.** No matter how people respond; whether it is in a rage, being infuriated, shaking their fists, shutting their ears, shouting their insults and carrying out their hate. Stephen's last words were ***"Lord, don't charge them with this sin!"*** Mercy to his enemies. But wait, there's more! The stoners laid their clothes at the feet of the chief hater, Saul. This Saul, who would drag anyone before the Jewish leaders, arrested anyone who professed Christ, and made sure they suffered to the utmost degree, **was prayed for by Stephen in the same way that Jesus prayed for His crucifiers. So Stephen left room for God to do what only He can do, and that is, turn the heart of hate into a heart of mercy.** Saul became Paul, and the rest is history.

Mercy makes room for miracles! When we activate mercy, we activate God's power. Who in your life has the potential to go from chief hater, to chief lover? Is it possible that their story could be rewritten by your willingness to give them something they don't deserve--mercy...

Reflection and Prayer:

- Mercy is making our love active. Who in your life can you make your love active to? How can you practically show them mercy?
- Realizing that mercy will cost you something, are you willing to suffer the loss of something to receive God's mercy?
- Mercy is completely opposite to the culture we live in. If someone were to look at your life, or your posts on Facebook, Twitter or anything else, would that communicate God's mercy, or would that communicate the same dog-eat-dog attitude of the world? Are you willing to change it, or are you simply going to justify it?
- The Proverb writer says, ***"If you see your enemy hungry, go buy him lunch; if he's thirsty, bring him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness, and God will look after you."*** (Proverbs 25:21-22 MSG) Who can you surprise with God's goodness this week? (Word of wisdom, don't buy someone lunch and tell them you did it because you see them as an enemy) Just be generous and leave the rest up to God.
- If you find it difficult to respond in mercy, then ask the Holy Spirit to empower and fill you with God's heart for others. **Simply pray: "Lord, I need your strength to love. I need your grace to trust. I need Your power to control my mouth. I need Your self-control to guard my heart. May I show mercy so that it will touch others, and so that they will have the opportunity to be changed by Your mercy. Fill me completely with Your Heart of mercy for others, especially those I perceive as enemies. Father, do what only You can do. I believe for miracles! In Jesus' Name, amen."**
- We are supposed to give God's mercy to others, but the only way to do that is to experience God's mercy ourselves. Have you allowed God's mercy to fully invade your heart? Invite Him to do it now and take a moment and bask in what you do not deserve or could ever earn! Let His mercy wash over you and flow out of you to others.