

**Day 25**  
**Talk is Cheap, Mercy Acts!**

**Matthew 5:7(NTE) 'Blessings on the merciful! You'll receive mercy yourselves.**

On the surface, mercy seems like one of the easier actions of the beatitudes. We think to ourselves: "I am a pretty easy going person. I am helpful, friendly and courteous. People often call me kind, so I am good on this mercy beatitude." Being friendly and courteous, literally, is the lowest level of mercy. As followers of Jesus, we should have a gentle, kind and friendly disposition. There is no validation for being inconsiderate, unfriendly or rude. If we are struggling to simply show common courtesy to others, we fall woefully short of the standard that Jesus set for us. Paul writes and says: **"Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon." (Philippians 4:5a NLT)**

This is a reminder and warning all wrapped into one. Letting everyone see that you are considerate is not so that you can brag, but so that people know who you identify with. "Considerate" means you are attentive, thoughtful, concerned, mindful, accommodating, helpful, cooperative, patient, kind, decent, unselfish, compassionate, sympathetic, caring, charitable, generous, polite and sensitive. When people see that we are considerate, it gives them an indication of Who we belong to. Because in the very same breath Paul warns us: **"Remember, the Lord is coming soon."** We all will be held accountable to how we represented Jesus to others. If people see us, they must see the same mercy that they would've seen if they encountered Jesus. Mercy is active; it is love in action. Mercy requires a price. The mercy that we must have is not activated in the easy days of life; it is made alive when love goes from words to actions. Because mercy has a whole lot more to do than just being considerate. Mercy is active; it is not stagnant. The towering theme we have seen in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is that God looks much deeper than you and I.

**A definition of mercy is: "Continual Active Love." If our love is to be continually activated, it produces an incredible result. "The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13:9-11 NIV)** Love does no harm to its neighbor. Mercy is powerful, because when we are merciful we are showing and demonstrating what our Father is like. When we demonstrate acts of mercy, we show that we love God. If we are not making our love active, meaning, we are not merciful, then we actually are showing that we do not love God, even if we say we do. Loving God and loving others are placed on equal footing throughout the Scripture. The most pronounced of these is the story I am sure we are all familiar with: The Good Samaritan.

**Jesus is being asked a question by an expert in religious Law. He is asking a question about inheriting eternal life, but his motive is to test Jesus. "The man answered, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 28 'Right!' Jesus told him. 'Do this and you will live!' 29 The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:27-29)** Then he does what we all sometimes do, justify. Justifying is "just lying" to ourselves. You can lie to others, you can lie to yourself, but you cannot lie to Jesus. So Jesus paints a picture with a story.

**"Jesus replied with a story: 'A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the**

*road. 31 By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. 33 Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' 36 'Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?' Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Then Jesus said, 'Yes, now go and do the same.'” (Luke 10:30-37)*

Let me say, first of all, that Jesus' mercy is displayed by Him telling a story. Jesus simply could've blown this expert in religious law out of the water by pointing out his hypocrisy and self-justification. So the details are important. Jesus says, "a Jewish man was traveling," so He makes it clear that this is a fellow Jewish brother. Then a priest and Levite, both part of the Jewish religious system, see this man, but do nothing about his condition and pass by. They see, but they don't act.

The next scene of Jesus' story must have made this religious Lawyer very uncomfortable. Because here enters a Samaritan. The Samaritans were a group of people despised by the Jews. To say these two groups did not get along, is like saying the Pope might be Catholic. The Jews and Samaritans loathed one another. This Samaritan sees this Jewish man, feels compassion for him, and acts. Mercy is love in action. He goes over to the man - mercy engages. He soothes his wounds - mercy heals. He puts the man on his donkey - mercy goes the extra mile. He took the man to an inn where he took care of him - mercy takes responsibility. He gave the innkeeper two silver coins - mercy acts generously. He promises to meet any more cost when he returns - mercy acts self-sacrificially and never gives up. Then Jesus simply asks, between these three characters (Priest, Levite and despised Samaritan), who was a true neighbor?

**Your neighbor, according to Jesus, is anyone in need of mercy. Mercy must be given to all we come in contact with.** It is true that we cannot meet every need, but what about the needs we know about? Do we simply walk to the other side (ignore it, justify ourselves) and keep on moving on with our religious rituals? Mercy acts. If you are worried about your capacity to help, then simply do what you can with what you have and trust God. I have found that those who are willing to act, somehow never lack capacity, because Jesus keeps on supplying when we keep on giving!

We can talk a good game about mercy, but mercy is only alive and flourishing when we are aware enough to see a need; when we care enough to engage in a need; when we are willing to give of ourselves and our resources to meet that need; when we see others as our neighbor, regardless of who they are and what they have done. **Talk is cheap; acts of mercy change lives.** It's time to be a neighbor like the Samaritan. How neighborly are you?

#### **Reflection and Prayer:**

- Mercy is being aware. How aware are you of the needs of others around you?
- Awareness comes when we have trained ourselves not to be self-absorbed, but to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Pray for a greater level of sensitivity. Take your eyes off of yourself and look for opportunities to show God's mercy to others.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you people the way He sees people.
- Be willing to take steps of faith to act out in mercy towards those the Father will show you.

- Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." Do you believe Jesus? If your answer is "Yes," then be generous in spreading God's mercy to all who need it, and you will have a front row seat to see how God will change lives, including your own.