

Three Christlike Qualities

Matthew 5:7-9

Let's turn our attention to our text for this morning. Matthew, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, pens the following Words:

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:1-12

THE PROGRESSION OF THE BEATITUDES

The first three Beatitudes show how a man stands as a sinner in relation to God – spiritually bankrupt, broken over our sin, and meekly humble. The fourth Beatitude contains the promise of God's provision of righteousness for the man who comes to him in desperation – panting and starving for righteousness. We must come to God like the deer in Psalm 42:1-2.

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? Psalms 42:1-2

The first four Beatitudes deal with the inner man. The fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth Beatitudes on the other hand mark a turning point in Jesus' sermon. They demonstrate the character (Romans 8:29, 12:1-2) of a genuinely converted person, especially in relation to how he interacts with *others*. These are the practical Beatitudes. Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" Matthew 5:7-9. The man who has tasted of the goodness of God's righteousness is to show mercy to others; he is to be pure in heart; and he is to be a peacemaker. It's interesting also to notice that there is a correlation between the first four Beatitudes and the four that follow:

Those who are poor in spirit and recognize their need for mercy (v.3)	Are merciful to others (v.7).
Those who mourn and are broken over their sin (v.4)	Pursue purity of heart (v.8).
Those who are meek (v.5)	Seek to make peace with others (v.9).
Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (v.6)	Are never unwilling to pay the price of being persecuted for righteousness' sake (v.10-12).

I. GOD DELIGHTS IN THOSE WHO ARE COMPASSIONATE (v.7)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

What does it mean to be merciful? The word “merciful” is the Greek word ἐλεήμων (eleemon) from the noun “mercy” ἔλεος (eleos). It means to show tender compassion and pity to those who are struggling under the effects of sin. It’s important to note that Jesus is referring to those whose bent is to show mercy and not just the occasional merciful impulse.¹ To understand mercy correctly, we must first understand something of God’s mercy that has been shown to us. We typically define mercy as God withholding what we rightly deserve. Another way to say that would be that God is not treating us as our sins deserve (cf. Psalm 103:10). Listen to the underserved mercy that God has shown to us:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4–7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... 1 Peter 1:2–3

CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE MERCIFUL BECAUSE OF THE MERCY THEY’VE BEEN SHOWN

Because God is merciful and shows mercy continuously, the citizens of His kingdom must also be compassionate and tenderhearted. Anyone have Ephesians 4:32 memorized? Let me challenge you to let your heart steep long in Paul’s words, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” To the degree you understand the weight of sin you’ve been forgiven, you will be ready to extend that same mercy and forgiveness to others who sin against you. Consider the mercy of Christ:

¹ Leon Morris, *PNTC: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 100.

A. Jesus felt mercy when he looked out over the multitudes.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36

B. Jesus expressed mercy as he hung on the cross.

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34

C. God is compassionate towards His children.

As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. Psalm 103:13–14

Because we have been the recipients of such lavish mercy from God, we in turn are to show mercy to others. The world prefers to insulate itself against the pains and calamities of men. But those who find mercy are to show it. Nothing so moves us to show mercy like the wondering knowledge that we ourselves have been shown mercy.² We are to show pity to those who are struggling under the burden of sin and its effects, knowing that we too struggle under the same burden. In Romans 9:22-23, Paul calls the redeemed "vessels of mercy". He said, "What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory."

Jesus taught the need for mercy specifically in two stories. He taught it first, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10:25-37) and second, in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35). We want to be like the Good Samaritan of Luke 10 and not like the unforgiving servant of Matthew 18. Turn over to Matthew 18:21-35 and let's look at a lack of mercy.

Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the

² John R. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 49.

jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. Matthew 18:23–35

A TEST OF YOUR MERCY

- A. How do you respond when you hear of another person who is struggling in sin?
Instead of feeling smug and self-righteous, do you pity them? Do you pray for them? Do you understand that apart from the grace of God, there go I?
- B. How do you respond when you encounter a discouraged brother or sister?
Do you avoid them knowing that encouragement requires work?
- C. How do you respond when someone lets you down or hurts you and needs your forgiveness?
Let me connect this back to the preceding beatitude for just a moment. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” Matthew 5:6. It’s good Christian speak to talk of our want and hunger for God. In reality, when you show graciousness and mercy toward those who have hurt you, you show how much of God you really want. On the other hand, if you seek to punish your offender or make them feel perpetually guilty, you demonstrate that you don’t want God as much as you thought you did or said you did.

Even if your offender hasn’t repented and asked for your forgiveness, we have no right to hold bitterness against them. God holds no bitterness against you – if you’re in Christ. True godliness seeks to set our offenders free instead of holding them captive. Friends, we are never more like Christ than when we are forgiving those who have sinned against us. A merciful spirit is reasonable, easy to entreat, and quick to forgive.

THEY SHALL RECEIVE MERCY

Let me say a brief final word concerning verse 7. This Beatitude has been problematic for some who see Jesus as saying that that receiving mercy from God depends on our showing mercy to others. Another way to say that is that we earn mercy by being merciful to others. If that were the case, if we were dealt with on those terms, no man would ever see heaven. What Jesus is saying is that we are to show mercy to others *because* of the lavish mercy that God has shown us. If we are not merciful to others, we show that we either understand very little about the mercy by which we have been saved, or that we have never tasted and received God’s mercy at all. Nothing proves with more clarity that we ourselves have been forgiven than our own readiness to forgive. To be meek is to acknowledge that we are sinners; to be merciful is to have compassion on others, for they too are sinners. I love the words of the 18th century hymn by Charles Wesley – *And Can it Be*:

*He left His Father’s throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,*

*And blest for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.*

II. GOD DELIGHTS IN THOSE WHO ARE SINCERE (v.8)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

In verse 8, Jesus confers special blessing not on the intellectually keen, nor the emotionally pious, but on the pure in heart.³ He says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The word "pure" is the Greek word καθαρός (katharos). It carries the idea of cleanliness, clarity, and sincerity. Jesus used the same root word when He said "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you *clean* the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence" Matthew 23:25.

The problem with the Pharisees, and before we point fingers we need to know that there is a Pharisee in each of our hearts, is that who they were on the inside and who they were on the outside were two totally different people. To be pure in heart carries the idea of cleanliness, but it also speaks of *transparency* and *sincerity*. Who we are out in the open needs to be the same as who we are in the innermost recesses of our hearts. Yet, how many of us are tempted to wear a different mask and play a different role depending on the occasion and who is watching? How many of us live one life and live it in the open? We can become great play-actors if we aren't careful.⁴

Purity of heart should be the desire of every blood bought sinner in response to the grace that has been given him at the cross. In 1 Timothy 1:5 Paul tells us, "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a *pure heart* and a good conscience and a sincere faith." In Psalm 51:6 David said, "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart." And then just four verses later he asked of God, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" Psalm 51:10.

JESUS ALWAYS TARGETS OUR HEARTS

What is the heart? The heart in Scripture is the inner person. It is where you relate to God. It is the command center of your thoughts, motives, desires, cravings, intentions, and affections. Your heart is your worship center. Your heart is where you fear, have peace, rejoice, trust, believe, grow weary, and take courage. It's also the place where you make excuses, lust, hold bitterness, envy, compare yourself to others, defend yourself, and lie to yourself. Your heart is the fountain of who you are. Solomon gave us great wisdom when he encouraged us in Proverbs 4:23 saying, "Above all else, guard your heart, for from it flow the springs of life."

³ D.A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: An Exposition of Matthew 5-10* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1978), 26.

⁴ John R. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 49.

Jesus' assessment of the natural heart isn't very appealing. In Matthew 15:18-20 Jesus said, "What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone." Jeremiah gives us insight into our hearts in Jeremiah 17:9-10. He says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? 'I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.'"

Despite this less than desirable diagnosis of our hearts, Jesus insists that purity of heart is an indispensable prerequisite for fellowship with God. In Psalm 24:3-5 David asks, "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a *pure heart*, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation." God is Holy; therefore, the writer of Hebrews insists, "Strive for...holiness without which no one will see the Lord" Hebrews 12:14. If we could spiritually x-ray your heart, what would we find? Would we see that it's pure? This Beatitude forces us to answer soul-searching questions like:

1. What do you love? What do you hate?
2. What do you desire, crave, lust, and wish for the most?
3. Where do you bank your hopes? Where do you take refuge? Who is the savior, judge, controller, provider, protector in your world? Who or what do you serve? Who or what do you trust?
4. What do you fear? What do you *not* want? What do you tend to worry about?
5. What frustrates you or makes you angry?
6. What are your plans, agendas, strategies, and intentions designed to accomplish?
7. What makes your clock tick? What sun does your planet revolve around? What lights up your world? What fountain of life, hope, and delight do you drink from? What food sustains your life? What really matters to you? What castle do you build in the clouds? What pipe dreams tantalize you? What do you organize your life around?
8. Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, and security? On whose shoulders does the well being of your world rest?
9. Who must you please? Whose opinion of you counts the most? From whom do you desire approval and fear rejection? Whose love and approval do you need?
10. What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to?
11. What do you pray for?
12. What do you think about most often? What preoccupies or obsesses you? In the morning, to what does your mind drift to instinctively?
13. What do you talk about the most?

14. How do you spend your leisure time?
15. How would you finish the sentence, "If only..."⁵

GOD IS AT WORK IN THE LIFE OF EVERY BELIEVER TO PURIFY HIS HEART

What means does God use to purify our hearts?

1. God purifies our hearts through the blood of Christ spilled on Calvary's hill.
How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Hebrews 9:14
2. God purifies our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit.
He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5
3. God purifies our hearts as we seek Him in faith.
And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Acts 15:8–9
4. God purifies our hearts through His Word.
Jesus told his disciples, "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you" John 15:3. Likewise, the writer of Hebrews says, "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" Hebrews 4:12–13.
5. God's grace teaches us to seek a pure heart.
For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Titus 2:11–14

Our hearts are purified by Christ, but that doesn't mean that they can't be soiled like a crusty plate, greasy glass, or soiled napkin. Every sin is like a wad of mud splattered on your windshield – sin obstructs your view of God. Therefore, we want to keep a close watch over our hearts (cf.

⁵ David Powlison, *Seeing With New Eyes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 132-140.

Proverbs 4:23). We want to quickly and aggressively deal with anything that dims the vision of God in our lives.

IT IS ONLY THE PURE IN HEART WHO WILL SEE GOD

In a daily sense, the more we walk in the light (cf. Ephesians 5:8, 1 John 1:7) and allow God's Word to expose our sin, and the quicker we confess and turn from our sin (cf. 1 John 1:9), the more we will "see" God's glory in our lives. In a word: We will see God work so clearly, powerfully, obviously, and magnificently that it would be true to say we have seen God.⁶ But Matthew is surely writing of an eschatological or future sense here as well. One day, when the Kingdom of Heaven is consummated, when there is a new heaven and new earth in which only righteousness dwells, when Christ Himself appears, we shall at last be like Him (cf. 1 John 3:2). This is our long-range hope and expectation. As a result, just one verse later, John tells us, "Everyone who hopes in Him purifies himself as he is pure" 1 John 3:3. The Christian purifies himself now because pure is what he will ultimately be.⁷ Friends, let me ask you a question, "Are your present efforts to be holy and pure consistent with your future hope of being forever pure?"

III. GOD DELIGHTS IN THOSE WHO SEEK RECONCILIATION (v.9)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Where do wars begin? James tells us, "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask" James 4:1-2. Wherever there are two sinners in close proximity, there will be conflict. Conflict is the result of viewing another person as an obstacle to you getting what you want instead of a divinely appointed sanctification tool from God. We get angry and wage war in our relationships when we don't get what we want or when we do get what we don't want. But when God saves us and gives us a new heart, we out to be less of a troublemaker and more of a peacemaker.

Within the biblical framework, Jesus Christ is the greatest peacemaker. He is the Prince of Peace (cf. Isaiah 9:6). He makes peace between God and man by paying our sin debt and He makes peace between men by bringing them into a right relationship with God, removing their hostility toward one another. Paul wrote, "For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross" Colossians 1:19-20. It is that peace we have with God that should spill out of our lives in peacemaking efforts with others.

⁶ R.T. Kendall, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen Books, 2001), 53.

⁷ D.A. Carson, 26.

Christians are to be characterized as peacemakers. We are no longer at war with God (Romans 5:1), and that changes not only our relationship with God, but also our relationships with others. We are not to live as selfish, demanding, angry, troublemakers anymore. We want others to come to know peace with God. We are to do all that we can to live at peace with all men without compromising the truth.

It is important to say a few things about what being a peacemaker isn't. A peacemaker isn't a pacifist. He doesn't make peace with sin in this world, he makes war with it. He doesn't make peace with lies and heresy, he exposes them. Jesus isn't saying that we are never to enter into conflict. Speaking of Himself, Jesus said, "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law" Luke 12:51-53. The truth will most certainly bring about conflict, but conflict should never be entered into as a war of wants, unmet expectations, and unfulfilled desires.

PEACEMAKING IN EVANGELISM

The good news of the gospel is the greatest peacemaking message on the face of the planet. The Christian who shares his faith is a harbinger of peace – a peacemaker. Isaiah 52:7 pictures a messenger racing through the Judean hill country when he writes, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."⁸ Paul reiterates this imagery in Romans 10.

THE LIFE OF A PEACEMAKER - ROMANS 12

1. A peacemaker deals with the pride of his own heart. (v. 16)
Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.
2. A peacemaker doesn't return evil for evil. (v. 17)
Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.
3. A peacemaker does all he can to live at peace with others. (v. 18)
If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
4. A peacemaker doesn't seek his own revenge. (v. 19)
Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

⁸ D.A. Carson, 27.

FIVE PRACTICAL NECESSITIES FOR BEING A PEACEMAKER

1. Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

James says, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God" James 1:19–20.

2. Own your part of any conflict.

Peacemakers are willing to say, "I sinned; I was wrong; will you please forgive me?" Blaming others and refusing to take responsibility for your part of a conflict is prideful not peacemaking. It takes two to tango. Conflict is always the result of two sinners whose desires are in opposition - usually selfishly instead of surrendered to the Lordship of Christ.

3. Be ready to forgive, even when it is difficult.

It's undoubted that it can be difficult at times to forgive others when we feel that we have been wronged. A sober reflection on the sinfulness and wickedness of your own heart and God's gracious forgiveness should motivate you to forgive others. Nothing proves more clearly that we have been forgiven than our own readiness to forgive others.

4. Be willing to work hard to lovingly resolve problems.

Conflict is an unavoidable reality within our relationships this side of eternity. But the gospel motivates us to resolve our conflict and bury the hatchet in the truth of the gospel of grace. Resolving conflict isn't easy – if it was, more people would be doing it. It takes hard, soul-work. But it's worth it. It glorifies Christ and it is a clear picture to the world of transformative power of the gospel in our lives.

5. Be prepared to do good and not evil even when your efforts at peacemaking are rejected.

God has called you to be a peacemaker regardless of how others respond. Jesus didn't say, "Seek peace only with those who make it easy for you!"

SONS OF GOD

The blessing that Jesus pronounces on the peacemakers is that they shall be called "sons of God." It's interesting to note that there is a distinction here between "children of God" (KJV) and "sons of God". To refer to someone as a child of another is to emphasize of his or her *position*. But in Jewish thought, "son" refers to one who bears the *character* of another. The point that Jesus is making is that when we are seeking to be reconcilers and peacemakers, we are exhibiting the character of God – for he is a peacemaking God. Are you at peace with Him?