

## Simply Unexpected – Week 4 – “Pursuing Peace with Mercy”

### Introduction

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Our focus this week is on the fifth and seventh Beatitudes, which declare that the merciful will receive mercy and that peacemakers will be called children of God. Mercy and peace are important biblical concepts that speak to God’s interactions with us and our interactions with others. God shows us His mercy when He chooses not to treat us as we deserve to be treated. Grace, which is mercy’s partner, is God blessing us with what we do not deserve.

Mercy and peace are attributes of God that we are called to concretely express in our treatment of others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is tempting to view mercy and peace as gifts we receive, not attitudes and actions in every aspect of life. The Greek word that is translated “mercy” means compassion, pity, or deep concern. Following God’s example, mercy means not treating others how we think they should be treated. This includes not seeking revenge or punishment when someone wrongs us, especially another follower of Jesus. This goes against what our culture teaches. It is a biblical model, the roots of which are found in the fact that the Law required restitution when possible and sought justice above any impulse to seek retribution.

Peace as it is described in the Bible is positive, not negative. Our culture most often views peace as the absence of conflict. This is a kind of peace, but it is not peace as the Bible defines it. The Greek word translated “peace” in our passage is the one used to translate the Hebrew word “shalom.” This word conveys the sense of peace as a state of harmony with self, God, and others. It is an action in the sense that those who seek peace in their relationships work to foster it without any regard for circumstances. Peace flows out of a heart that is at peace with God, a heart that knows the gift of forgiveness full and free in Jesus and continuously seeks to live it out in every relationship.

**This week:** The blessings of living out mercy and peace in all our relationships.

*<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy. <sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matt. 5:7, 9 NIV)*

### **Opening Discussion:**

1. Share one thing that you found helpful from Sunday's message.
2. How would you define "mercy" based on the message? How does this compare to the ways that our culture defines mercy?
3. How would you define "peace" based on the message? How does this compare to the ways that our culture defines peace?

### **Study Time:**

1. **The fifth Beatitude calls us to seek and show mercy in our relationships. This is possible because of the link between mercy and forgiveness. The mercy that we receive from God is ours to share, not keep to ourselves.**

This is supported by Jesus' command to "do to others as you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12 NIV). If we expect and receive mercy from God, then we must also be willing to show it to others. Jesus said the same thing when he taught about the importance of forgiveness (Matthew 6:15). A merciful attitude is reflected in our refusal to be bound by cultural assumptions about revenge and retribution.

- a. What is the difference between restitution and retribution? What are some ways that mercy might impact our desire for them?
- b. Read **Luke 6:35-36** and reflect on how God's mercy was conveyed to us when He raised Jesus from the dead.
- c. The willingness to show mercy is part of what it means for us to love one another as God loves us. Love is action, not just emotion. When we apply this to showing mercy it means that we can be merciful even if we are not feeling merciful. Read **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** and reflect on how each of these actions are an expression of mercy.

**2. The seventh Beatitude calls us to be peacemakers. Peace is an inner way of life, not just an external condition. Psalm 34:14 encourages God's people to "seek peace and pursue it." This is part of what it means to make peace by seeking reconciliation, not revenge when we are wronged. This is clearly not the same as avoiding conflict. Instead, leaning into the conflict by working toward reconciliation is a pathway to peace.**

- a. Read **John 14:26-27**. The context is Jesus' last meal with his disciples. He told them that he was going to die and that after he left them, they would experience hardship and persecution. Jesus clearly intended for them to understand that his peace was different from the world's peace. Discuss how they are different and why it is important for our faith.
- b. Read **Hebrews 13:20-21** and reflect on how peace as we have defined it helps "equip [us] with everything good for doing His will." What are some ways that we impact the world by being intentionally peaceful?
- c. Peacemaking on the global scene often includes the threat or use of force in the attempt to impose peace on others. This is not the biblical approach to peacemaking. Instead, biblical peacemaking seeks to change hearts, not institutions or power structures. Jesus restored our peace with God when he obediently died on the cross in payment for our sins. This means that seeking peace sometimes requires sacrifice. What are some things that we might be called to sacrifice when seeking peace with others?
- d. Spend the rest of your time discussing seeking God's peace in our lives and our relationships might change us individually and impact the people around us.