

Fil-Am Community Church

Pastor Rolly Estabillo

Key verse: Matthew 5:7

“BE MERCIFUL”

Good morning. Welcome to Fil-Am. We are so glad to see you here. We are in the middle of a series called “The Be Attitudes: Learning from the Sermon of Jesus”. Believe it or not, we are over half way through. Each week, during this series, we have been looking at one of the Beatitudes. Those are the first eight statements that Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount. In these eight statements, Jesus gives us the key to living a life that God can bless.

Today’s Beatitude is about relating to others. Jesus said this, let’s read it out loud together. *“God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”* Jesus is saying, you get what you give. In this case, this blessing is based on the law of direct return. You give mercy, you get

mercy. You don't give mercy, you don't get mercy. You reap what you sow.

But not every Beatitude is like that, but this one is like that. If you want to receive mercy in your life, you need to give mercy. If you are friendly to other people, God will work it out for people to be friendly to you. You criticize other people, they will criticize you. If you are merciful to other people, they will be merciful to you.

So, I'm here to talk about mercy. What do I know about mercy? I know a girl named Mercy in college but she was merciless. She dumped me. Just kidding.

But what is mercy? How about giving a homeless guy some spare change? Would you say that's what most people think of when they think of mercy? Maybe, yes, maybe, no. But that's easy stuff. Things I don't need. There is nothing required. There is nothing involved. Mercy, to me, is when you have that great shot at revenge, like at the movies, when you've got the

bad guy cornered and begging for life and then you turn your gun away and let the cops handcuff him instead.

I think the hard part about mercy, or what mercy is about, is those little day-to-day things that just hammer you. You know, the things you really want to do. I mean really, really, really want to do. Last week, I wanted to really cut off the guy who cut me off the road on the way to church. But I remembered I was a pastor. Perhaps, someone takes your soda from the mini-fridge at work and then they have the audacity to say that you are the one to blame because you didn't label it. You want to get back, you want to get even but the Holy Spirit reminds you that it's not the Christian thing to do.

But that's not the whole picture of mercy. Mercy connotes compassion. It is having sympathy or pity toward others. It is being kind but more than kind because you get to feel what others feel. And to take the meaning to another level, you show real mercy when you take action. Mercy, then, is love in action. So, if your wife asks you to go window-shopping at the mall

and then, she sees these beautiful shoes and tells you how much she likes them and with some hesitation you just hand over your money without saying a word, then you're being merciful because you're feeling how she feels and you took action.

So, there are two sides to mercy. One is being non-vindictive and the other is being compassionate. The bottom line, however, is you don't just say you're merciful. You've got to show it, you've got to do it. It's not just an emotion. It's an action.

So how do I know if I am showing mercy? Let me give you the four marks of mercy. You can evaluate yourself to see how merciful of a person you are. If you give it, you get it. If you don't give it, you don't get it. Here it is: if I am merciful:

1. I'll be patient with those who are peculiar.

Do you know anyone peculiar? Someone strange or odd? I know one.

That's me. I have my own peculiarities.

My wife didn't know about these until we got married. I'm sure that's the same with you. Everyone is peculiar, right? But we don't readily admit that we are peculiar. Somebody else is but not me. In any case, when we see or encounter someone who is peculiar, how do we treat them? How do you handle peculiar people who, for us, can be obnoxious? What does the Bible say? I Thessalonians 5:14 says this, *"Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take care of those who are weak and be patient with everyone."* Wow. Be patient with everyone. What a challenge. Are you patient with everyone? Some of you may perceive me as a patient man. My children will disagree.

The Bible says that if I am to be merciful, if I am to be blessed, if I am going to be happy, I need to learn to be patient with those who are peculiar.

Here's one thing I have learned in being patient with peculiar people. To be patient with peculiar people, one of the first steps, is to learn their

background. Sometimes the reason they are peculiar is because of their background. Look at where they came from. When you take a minute and look at where the person came from, instead of saying—look how far they have to go, say—look how far they have come. This makes you a little bit more patient because you begin to look beneath the external behavior of the person and you begin to see, sometimes, some internal struggles, some internal pain, internal difficulties, because behind most every peculiar behavior is some kind of internal pain. Some kind of loneliness. Some kind of hurt. Some kind of depression, a kind of anxiety that God says we need to look at and we need to be patient with them. The Bible says—accept each other. Romans 15:7. *“So accept each other, just as Christ has accepted you then God will be glorified.”* Were you a peculiar person? Sure you were. Did God accept you? Yep. So He says, we should accept others. Be patient with them.

Look, merciful people are accepting people. They are not quick to criticize or judge, realizing sometimes that hurtful people are hurting people. Learn to be patient.

2. I will forgive those who have fallen.

Look, everyone is going to mess up in life. Nobody is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. So we must learn to forgive. When people make mistakes, how do you react? Do you rub it in, or do you rub it out? When people let you down, do you hold it over their heads for the rest of their life and never let them off the hook? It's easy to hold grudges. It's not easy to forgive.

In January 1990, I arrived in Australia to work. Two months later I got fired because I didn't perform well. I then became bitter and angry with my boss who fired me.

After about a month, I got another job. In my new job, God was gracious because despite my shortcoming in my former job, he gave me my own desk, (in my former job, I shared the table with someone), with a guest chair to boot. Now, where I sat, it was located in front of the office of the department head, just across the aisle. And since his office had glass walls,

I could see him and he could see me. Anyway, one day, as I was merrily typing away at my computer, now happy at my new-found position, I glanced at our department head's office and saw that he had a guest and who do you think it was? My former boss who fired me! He was actually being interviewed. Suddenly, blood rushed to my head and bitterness filled my heart again. Getting anxious, I stood up and went to the bathroom. I didn't know how I would handle the situation if ever we face each other again. So, I prayed for God's help and just then, he reminded me of my devotions that week. I was studying the life of Joseph the Dreamer and it dawned on me that Joseph forgave his brothers though they didn't treat him well. After that, I became peaceful and went back to my desk.

After a few moments, I saw my former boss emerged out of the office and went straight to me upon seeing me. I asked him to seat at the guest chair and we conversed. You know what, he couldn't look straight at me. Then, he apologized for firing me and I said that it was nothing. I had forgiven him already at the bathroom.

Look, there is power in forgiveness. There's defeat in holding grudges.

Colossians 3:13 says, *"Be gentle and ready to forgive. Never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you so you must forgive others."*

You know, forgiveness is an interesting thing. Everyone of us love to receive forgiveness. And when we receive forgiveness, it feels so right, but when we are called to give forgiveness, it feels so wrong. See, we like to think—you know, I really don't want to be merciful. I want justice. Look, if you are to be patient with people, it's not about justice. You don't really want justice; because God says if you pray for justice for other people, expect it for you. I don't want justice for me, I've done a lot of stuff, but I don't want justice for it, instead I want mercy. I want forgiveness so I should offer that to other people. Look, if I am patient, I will be forgiving to the fallen. It's a lot easier to criticize than sympathize; it's a lot easier to point a finger than it is to lend a hand or to offer forgiveness. But that's what being merciful is all about.

3. I will help those who are hurting.

If I want to be a merciful person, I will help those who are hurting. Look at this next verse, Proverbs 3:27. Let's read this verse aloud together. This is what it says, *"Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act."* Mercy is practical assistance. There are people all around you who are hurting, in your workplace, in school, in your family. There are people who are hurting in this room. Now let me tell you something, when you feel sorry for a person who is hurting, you are not being like Christ.

It's when you do something about that hurt that you are being like Christ.

When you take action, when you do something about it. Suppose your wife falls down and she hurts her ankle. If you came in and say—oh, honey, I'm sorry you hurt your ankle. I will be praying for you while I am in here watching television. Now, if you say that, that wouldn't make her very happy. She wants you to take action, to give her something for the pain, to help her get around, to fix dinner for her. Remember, mercy isn't just pity, it's love in action. Look at I John 3:17-18, it says this, *"If someone who is supposed to be a Christian has enough money to live on and sees a*

brother in need, but won't help him, how can God's love be in him? Let's just stop saying we love people, let's show it by our actions." Underline that last part—show it by our actions. I don't know about you, but this verse it stabs me like a dagger. How can God's love be in me if I won't help someone who is hurting. Just saying that we love people, isn't enough. We have to show it. We have to do something real. Let's really help people.

Last week, Pastor Dave showed a video of some people here in our churches who were handing out quarters in small plastic bags to people in Laundromats. By and large, those people were so eager to receive those quarters. And you can see in their faces how thankful they were and how happy they were for those extra quarters. For some of them, the quarters, although not much, really meant a lot. These are people who are hurt by the economy. And maybe there are some of them who are hurting inside because of some problem and they need assurance that they are loved, that there are people who care about them and their needs.

We want actions like these to be a consistent thing in the church. We realize that we're touching one life at a time as we go out and do a practical thing for people. Next week, after Service, we'll do another Servant Evangelism outreach event. This time, we're going to distribute bottled water in four busy places in this area. You're welcome to join our Servant Evangelism team.

John Wesley's motto was this. This is what he always said—do all the good that you can, by all the means that you can, in all the ways you can, and all the places you can, and all the times you can, to all people that you can, for as long as you ever can. He says, when you see someone hurting, do something about it. So many of us are bystanders when we observe other people hurting. But Jesus said—happy are those who care enough to get involved. This involves just taking it one step further. Look at the next verse. It's Jude 1, "Be merciful to those who doubt." You know when you are hurting, that's when you are most likely to doubt. When you are really hurting, you say—"Where is God? He's not hearing my prayer, He's not even here. Does God really exist?" If you have never had these

doubts before, you have probably not really experienced a lot of pain before. But if you have been in pain, you know exactly what I am talking about. Doubts come in.

What is the Christ-like response to those in doubt? You don't debate, you don't say—I'm going prove God exists to you in my words. You don't demean them, you don't put them down, you don't disown them, you say—you're not a Christian if you are having doubts. What you do is you show mercy. Be understanding and supportive to them. Show mercy to those who doubt and are in pain. Prove that God exists, not by your words but for your actions, by showing them love and by showing them compassion. If I am merciful, I'll help those who are hurting. That's number three.

Have you noticed, as we are going through these three different steps, that each one seems to get progressively more difficult. Number four—here's the hardest one.

4. If I'm merciful, I'll do good to my enemies.

Look at Luke 6. This is Jesus talking, He says, *“If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.”* You see, Jesus isn’t easy here, He’s being quite sarcastic. He’s being very biting, He has very biting sarcasm here. He says—Oh, look, you did something nice for your friend! Wow, big deal, let’s throw a parade. That’s nothing. He says, “Even the worst of the worst do that little,” but then He goes on to say, “Love your enemies, do good to them, then your reward will be great. Then, that’s when you are going to get my attention, being merciful, just as your Father is.” If you want to be like God, then you have to be merciful. Do good to those who do evil to you. See, that’s exactly the opposite of what society tells us. Society tells us that when people hurt you, hurt them back. Get even. When people gossip about you, you talk about them. You do anything you can, but God says that is a reactor. I want you to be an actor, not a reactor. You not only forgive that person, but you becoming a nice person through that person. That’s what Jesus would do and that’s what is so hard. You see, when we are forced to face difficult people, when we are forced to deal with people who have hurt us

and said things about us, we have three choices. One, is retribution, you know, an eye for an eye, a tooth for tooth. I'm going to get you back twice as bad as you got me. That's retribution. The second choice is to be polite. That's one of the first steps that Jesus was saying. Turn the other cheek. I'm just not going to react. But Jesus says, go further than that. There's a third way you can react. That is—do good to them. Take the initiative and do good. You know, tomorrow morning, or Tuesday morning, you are going to work or you are going to school or wherever it is that you are going, you are going to see that guy that you just can't stand. Maybe it will be that girl who is constantly criticizing you and is a real jerk. She's always on your case. Now, hopefully, you are not sitting next to that person right now. I hope you are not.

But the Bible says, you are supposed to be good to that person. How would it be if every time he criticized you, you complimented him. Or every time she put you down, you built her up? If you said something nice to them and encouraged them, that would blow their minds but that's what Jesus said to do. Being merciful is when you return good for evil. Why

would you do that? Because the best way to eliminate an enemy is to turn your enemies into friends. Smother them with kindness, they don't know how to handle it because the world isn't supposed to respond that way. They don't know what to do with it.

You see, retribution just increases the hurt and continues the cycle. But when we respond out of love and compassion, instead out of retribution, we stop hurting people and we begin the healing process. Do you remember our definition of mercy? Mercy is what? Mercy is love in action. That's right. Mercy is the way that God treats people. God is kind, merciful, slow to anger. The rest of the verse in the Living Bible says, "His compassion is entertained in everything that He does." Is there compassion in everything that we do? Even towards our enemies? That's mercy.

Let's review the four marks of mercy. I'll be patient with those who are peculiar. I'll forgive those who have fallen. I'll help those who are hurting. I'll do good to my enemies. The question is, are these four marks present

in your life? Still another questions is, Why even try to be merciful? Let me give you two motivators.

Because God has shown mercy to me.

Jesus asked rhetorically in Matthew 18:33, *“Shouldn’t you have mercy on others, just as I had mercy on you”*. If you are having a hard time being merciful to other people, just remember all the times you were a jerk to God and yet He had mercy on you. One day some of the religious hypocrites caught a woman in the act of adultery. They dragged her out to Jesus.

In those days, the law said that if you were caught in adultery, you were to be stoned immediately. So they brought them to Jesus and said—Jesus we caught this woman in adultery, what do you want us to do? Jesus said, “Well, the law says that you should stone her. Let those of you who are without sin in your life, throw the first stone.” Of course, they silently walked away because none of them were without sin. We all need God’s mercy. Another time, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount—look, you

are so concerned about the problems that other people have. Instead of saying that they have a little speck of sawdust in their eye, instead why don't you focus on the big telephone pole that you have in your own eye. Look, no contest. God has been merciful to me, so I need to be merciful to other people. Look, what we tend to do is we tend to judge other people by their worst faults, and we tend to judge ourselves by our best intentions. Be merciful. Why? Because God has shown mercy to me.

Be merciful because I am going to need mercy in the future.

You see, not only has God been merciful to you in the past, but you are going to need more mercy in the future. I can make one promise about my future. I'm not going to be perfect. I'm going to let people down. I'm going to tick people off. I'm going to be a peculiar person. I'm going to need some forgiveness. I am going to be hurting and need your help. I might even be your enemy. So will you be mine from time to time. So you are going to need mercy in the future. Now, we never try to water down what Jesus says. This is a tough teaching. The Bible says this and Jesus said this as well. James 2:13 is in your outline, it says, *"For there will be no*

mercy for you if you have not been merciful to others.” Tough teaching.

We need to be merciful to others because we are going to need some mercy in the future. Now, our natural human inclination is to say—but, God you don’t know how much that person has hurt me. And they continue to hurt me, how in the world can I forgive?

If you say that, then I hope from this day forward, you never sin. Because forgiveness and mercy are a two way street. When you refuse to forgive others, Jesus said, at the end of the Lord’s Prayer that God will not forgive you. When you say—I’m not going to show mercy to other people, you are burning a bridge that you need to walk across in order to get to Heaven. Because the Bible says that those who show mercy, receive mercy. Tough teaching. Those who don’t show mercy, don’t receive mercy. Look, I need to be merciful, because I’m going to need it in the future. I’m going to make some mistakes. Don’t burn the bridges. Be very careful about demanding justice. God may give it to the other person, and He may also give it to you. You see, if we all got what we deserved, we wouldn’t be here. God does not give us what we deserve, He gives us what we need. He acts

toward us in love. That's mercy. Mercy is love in action. So He calls us to act toward others in love, means that we show them mercy. Mercy is giving to others, not what they deserve when they have fallen or when they hurt us, but giving them what they need. That's mercy. And that's tough. That's one of the motivations.

Be merciful, because it's one of the keys to being happy. So how do you become a merciful person? Look, you can't be merciful unless you first receive mercy. In fact, it's impossible for someone who does not know Jesus Christ to be completely merciful. Why?

Because you can't be merciful until you have received mercy. Then you can only be merciful to others in proportion to how much mercy you have received. Look, we need a lot of mercy. Because we have messed up big time.

Let us Pray.....