

Small Group Questions

Sermon Based Small Groups - January 30, 2011

Adult Education – Woodbury Community Church
Woodbury, Minnesota

Sermon Title: The Gift of Mercy

Sermon Series: The Sermon on the Mount: Living as Citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven

Pray: Each week, we want to take time to lift up one another's prayer concerns. True Christians pray for one another. Take some time at the beginning of your small group time to pray for each other. Be real with each other. If you are hurting, take the risk and share how you are feeling with the group. If you have something that God has blessed you with this week, share it. Give Him the glory for what He is doing in your life. Record the prayer requests in the "Notes" section on the right of this page, and make a commitment to pray for the needs of the people in your group throughout the week.

Ice Breaker: Think back to a time in your childhood or early adult years where you really needed to be shown mercy. Were you granted mercy? If you are willing to, tell the story to your group.

Read: Matthew 5:1-7.

Discuss: Jeff Bauman shared a quote that he heard from John Kimball in the video on mercy during this week's sermon. The quote talked about the difference between mercy and grace. How would you define the difference between mercy and grace?

Quote: Max Lucado writes, "Resentment is when you let your hurt become hate. Resentment is when you allow what is eating you to eat you up. Resentment is when you poke, stoke, feed, and fan the fire, stirring the flames and reliving the pain. Resentment is the deliberate decision to nurse the offense until it becomes a black, furry, growling grudge."¹

Discuss: Why do you suppose that so many people choose to live with resentment rather than forgiveness? What are some ways that you have found freedom from resentment?

¹ Max Lucado, *The Applause of Heaven*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1999), pp. 108-109.

Notes:

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Read: Read the following passages and jot down what the verses teach us about being people of mercy?

- Hosea 6:6
- Matthew 9:9-13
- Matthew 23:23
- Micah 6:8
- Amos 5:21-24
- Luke 10:30-37

Read and Discuss: Read James 1:19-27. This passage talks about being doers of the word. In light of all that we've just read about mercy, and recognizing that a part of mercy is showing compassion in action, what are some practical ways that you as a small group can show compassion in action? What are some ways that you are individually involved in showing compassion in action? Use the chart below to write down the act of compassion and then check if it is something that your small group can do together, or if it is something that you are committing to do personally.

Act of Compassion	Small Group	Personal Involvement

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Read: Read the following passages and jot down what the verses teach us about being people who forgive?

- Matthew 6:14, 15

- Matthew 18:21-34

Quote: Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote a great summary of the Beatitudes up to this point. He writes, “I am poor in spirit; I realize that I have no righteousness; I realize that face-to-face with God and His righteousness I am utterly helpless; I can do nothing. Not only that. I mourn because of the sin that is within me; I have come to see, as the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit, the blackness of my own heart. I know what it is to cry out, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?’ and desire to be rid of this vileness that is within me. Not only that I am meek, which means that now that I have experienced this true view of myself, nobody else can hurt me, nobody else can insult me, nobody else can ever say anything too bad about me. I have seen myself, and my greatest enemy does not know the worst about me. I have seen myself as something truly hateful, and it is because of this that I have hungered and thirsted after righteousness. I have longed for it. I have seen that I cannot create or produce it, and that nobody else can. I have seen my desperate position in the sight of God. I have hungered and thirsted for righteousness which will put me right with God, that will reconcile me to God, and give me a new nature and life. And I have seen it in Christ. I have been filled; I have received it all as a free gift.

Does it not follow inevitably that, if I have seen and experienced all that, my attitude towards everybody else must be completely and entirely changed? If all that is true of me, I no longer see men as I used to see them. I see them now with a Christian eye. I see them as the dupes and the victims and the slaves of sin and Satan and the way of the world. I have come to see them not simply as men whom I dislike but as men to be pitied. I have come to see them as being governed by the god of this world, and still where once I was, and would be yet but for the grace of God. So I am sorry for them. I do not merely see them and what they do. I see them as slaves of hell and of Satan, and my whole attitude towards them is changed. And because of that, of course, I can be and must be merciful with respect to them. I differentiate between the sinner and his sin. I see everybody who is in a state of sin as one to be pitied.”²

² D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount: Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 86-87.

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Discuss: When you read Jones' summary of the Beatitudes that we have covered so far, what strikes you most? Which one of the Beatitudes is God most working to produce in your life right now?

Pray: As you close in prayer, ask God to help you be a person of mercy. If you need help forgiving someone else, ask the group for prayer. You don't have to share the specifics (in fact, if telling the specifics would tear someone else down or create gossip, don't). Just ask for prayer as you move into this week. Remember the end of this week's message - the steps toward being a person of mercy: Pray, Look, Go, and Do. After we go through all of those steps we need to go back and pray again. Pray for each person in this group as they seek to live as merciful people.