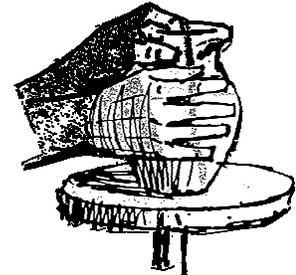


# His Workmanship Westside

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."  
—Ephesians 2:10*



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Isaiah 64:8

## Blessed Are The Merciful, Beatitudes, Part 6, by John Piper

Let's consider four questions:

I. How does a heart become merciful?

Or where does mercy come from?

II. What is mercy? Or what is a merciful person like?

III. Should a merciful person always show mercy? Or can a Christian be a prosecuting attorney?

IV. Why will only merciful people find mercy from God in the judgment day, if salvation is by grace through faith?

Or what does our mercy have to do with God's grace? These are very practical and immensely important questions. Let's answer the first question in its immediate context.

**I. How Does a Heart Become Merciful?** Recall how we saw the first three beatitudes in Mt 5:3–5 describing the emptiness of the blessed person: v. 3, poverty-stricken in spirit; v. 4, grieving over the sin and misery of his condition; and v. 5, accepting the hardships and accusations of life in meekness without defensiveness. This condition of blessed emptiness is followed in v. 6 by the transition, a hunger and thirst for the fullness of righteousness. Then came three descriptions of how righteousness abounds in the heart of the hungry. Mercy in v. 7, purity in v. 8, and peacemaking in v. 9. So the answer to the first question is that

mercy comes from a heart that has first felt its spiritual bankruptcy, has come to grief over its sin, has learned to wait meekly for the timing of the Lord, and cries out in hunger for the work of His mercy to satisfy us with the righteousness we need. Mercy is itself the blessing of God. It grows like fruit in a broken heart, a meek spirit, and a soul that hungers and thirsts for God to be merciful. Mercy comes from mercy. Our mercy to each other comes from God's mercy to us.

The key to becoming a merciful person is to be broken. We get the power to show mercy from the real feeling in our hearts that we owe everything we are and have to divine mercy. Therefore, if we want to become merciful people, it is imperative that we cultivate a view of God and ourselves that helps us to say with all our heart that every joy and virtue—and even every distress—of our lives is owing to the free and undeserved mercy of God.

**II. What Is Mercy?** Or what is a merciful person like? Sometimes it helps get something clear if we can see it against its opposite. Where is mercy contrasted with its opposite? Matthew and Luke give some very helpful illustrations. *"And as He sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and*

*sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when He heard it, He said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'*" Mt 9:10-13.

### **B. Mercy Contrasted to Sacrifice.**

In this illustration, mercy is not sacrifice: *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice,"* v. 13. This is a quotation from Hos 6:6 where God accused the people of shallow love: their love was like the dew on the grass. It was there for a brief morning hour, and then gone, and all that was left was the empty form of burnt offerings. God wants His people to be alive in their love. He wants them to have fervent feelings of affection toward Him and mercy toward each other. He does not want a people who do their religious duties in a perfunctory or merely formal way. Here in Mt 9 Jesus saw sinners as sick and miserable people in need of a physician, even though they were the rich money movers of the day, the tax collectors. They were sick. He had medicine. But all that the Pharisees saw was an outward, ceremonial

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**Blessed are the Merciful**, from p. 1 problem with contamination by eating with sinners. Their life seemed to be a mechanical implementation of rules. Something huge was at stake here. But they could not see it or feel it. They were enslaved to the trivial issues of ceremonial cleanness when Christ was about to heal eternal sickness. Thus, the opposite of mercy is bondage to religious trivia.

**B. Mercy Contrasted to Straining Out Gnats.** In another example Jesus told the Pharisees that they majored in the minors: *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"* Mt 23:23-24. What is the opposite of mercy in these stinging words of the Lord? The opposite of mercy is straining gnats. The opposite of mercy is when your religious impulses are exhausted after you have decided whether to tithe your gross income or your net income or your birthday gifts. The lesson we learn from Jesus when He said, *"I desire mercy not sacrifice,"* and when He said, *"You strain out a gnat and swallow a camel,"* is that a great obstacle and enemy to mercy is the preoccupation with trifles in life. The bondage to triviality is the curse of the unmerciful. Jesus wants us to know the importance of our lives in His kingdom

When Jesus said, *"Don't neglect the weightier matters of the law,"* he meant, *"Beware of going through the day doing only trivial things, thinking only trivial thoughts, feeling only trivial feelings. My kingdom is significant."* The Lord wants us to pinch ourselves again and again lest we be found swooning in front of the television, making no plans for the weighty matter of mercy. Blessed are the merciful. Therefore, if you want to be blessed, you must make war against the bondage of trifles, both

religious and secular, and devote your life to weightier matters: justice, mercy, faith. Mercy is no trifle. It is one of the weightiest matters in all of life.

**C. Mercy in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.** Another illustration of the opposite of mercy is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan: *"And behold a lawyer stood up to put Him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? How do you read?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord*

*"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."*  
**How many places does this verse appear in the Bible?**

*your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.'* And he said to him, *'You have answered right. Do this, and you will live,'* "Lk 10:25-28. The lawyer asked Jesus how a person should act if he expected to find mercy and inherit eternal life at the judgment day. Jesus answered that those who will receive mercy will have loved God with all their hearts and their neighbor as themselves. In other words, *"Blessed are those who are merciful now to their neighbor, for they shall receive the mercy of eternal life in the future."* So this account is relevant to mercy. This is obvious when we look at the parable Jesus told after this exchange. The lawyer asked, "Who then is my neighbor?" v. 29. Jesus answered with the parable of the Good Samaritan in Lk 10:30-37: *"Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho [and so he was probably a Jew and thus hated by the Samaritans], and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to go down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he*

*had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of the three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed mercy on him.'* Then Jesus said to him, *'Go and do likewise.'*"

**(1) Four Dimensions of Mercy.** Here we have a very sharp photograph of mercy and its opposite.

- a. Mercy sees distress (v. 33: *"A Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and he saw him"*).
- b. Mercy responds internally (with feeling) with a heart of compassion or pity toward a person in distress (v. 33: *"When he saw him, he had compassion on him"*).
- c. Mercy responds externally (with action) with a practical effort to relieve the distress (v. 33: *"He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine; then set him on his own beast, took him to an inn, and cared for him"*).
- d. Mercy is kind even when the person in distress is by religion and race an enemy (v. 33: *"But a Samaritan..."*). A half-breed Jew with a warped religious tradition stopped to help the Jew who probably hated him. *An eye for distress, a heart of pity, an effort to help, in spite of enmity—that's mercy.*

**(2) The Opposite of Mercy.** And its opposite? Isn't it remarkable that this parable makes the same point as Mt 9:13? There Jesus said, *"Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'*" Here He says, *"Go and show mercy like the Samaritan, not like the priest and the Levite."* The priest and the Levite stand for the same thing in the parable that the word *sacrifice* stands for in Mt 9:13, namely, empty religious formalism. Why did Jesus choose to illustrate the opposite of mercy with a priest and a Levite?

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**Let your faith be seen in 2014**  
 "I rejoice to see your good order  
 and the steadfastness of your faith  
 in Christ."  
 —Colossians 2:5

**Mercy from Mercy, from p. 2**

With an elder and a song leader? Is it not a warning to all of us that there are far too many people who are caught up in the mechanics of religious activity with no eye to see distress, no heart to respond with compassion, and no effort to bring the relief of the gospel?

**D. Mercy Is A Weightier Matter of Life.** So in answer to our second question, "what is mercy?" we should say that mercy is a weightier matter. It is always in danger of being neglected because of our preoccupation with trifles, whether secular trifles like watching too much television or consuming ourselves with some hobby, or religious trifles. What's a religious trifle? A religious trifle is a religious activity (from preaching to praying, from teaching to giving)—any religious activity at all—that does not cultivate a heart that is taken up with the weightier matters of life, like mercy. The proof of the religious pudding is in the power to see distress, feel pity, perform relief, and do all of that even toward an enemy.

**III. Should a Merciful Person Always Show Mercy?** Or can a Christian be a prosecuting attorney? Real life is complex for Christians who seriously want to live out their faith in a sinful world.

- Can a Christian be consistently merciful and yet be a parent who spans a child for disobedience (justice) instead of tolerating the child's insolence?
- Can a Christian be consistently merciful and yet be an employer who pays good wages for excellent work but dismisses irresponsible employees who do shoddy work (justice)?

## Discipleship Here At Home

- Can a Christian be consistently merciful and yet be a legislator who enacts laws that give stiff penalties for drunk driving and child abuse (justice)?
- Can a Christian be consistently merciful and yet be follow the Biblical mandate for church discipline and withdraw from a member of the body for unrepented, public sin (justice)?

Each of these four questions corresponds to a sphere of life: the sphere of the family, the sphere of business and economics, the sphere of government and law enforcement, and the sphere of the church. The answer is that it is God's will that as long as this age lasts there be a mingling of mercy and justice in all these spheres.

**A. Mingling of Both Justice and Mercy in This Age.** God's will is that sometimes we recompense people with what they deserve, whether punishment or reward (call that justice or righteous consequences). God's will is that sometimes we recompense people with better than what they deserve (call that mercy). In upholding the claims of justice, we bear witness to the truth that God is a God of justice. In showing mercy we bear witness to the truth that God is a God of mercy.

- A godly parent will usually follow the wisdom that sparing the rod spoils the child, Pr 13:24; Eph 6:4. But sometimes a parent will forgive a child's fault without punishment to teach the meaning of mercy and woo the child to Christ.
- A lawful judge will be scrupulously impartial by sentencing criminals according to the grievousness of their crimes, Rm 13:4. But sometimes she will dispense clemency for some greater good.
- A righteous employer will usually pay a fair wage and insist on good workmanship, 2 Thes 3:10. But sometimes he will pay more than a person's work deserves, and go an extra mile with a

**PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here and away**

**Mark Campbell**—in ICU last week with seizure and blood clot

**Giles Free**—seizure and black eye from fall; confined at home, no driving for 3 mos

**Pat Wilkes**—recovering from knee surgery; pain

**Brittany Tope's** grandmother—dialysis

**Ed Fink**—prostate cancer; current treatment for brain tumors. Begins chemo Aug. 1

**Mina Gonzalez's** daughter-in-law and granddaughters, **Lauren**—broken foot; **Juliet**—broken collarbone; **Bella**—broken arm

**Sue Witherington, Brett's** grandmother—breast cancer has returned

**Shirley Barrett, Rod Green's** mother—breathing

**Rhonda Love, friend of Judy Strand**—terminal cancer; young mother studying with Jim & Vicki

**Gregg Geis's** friend **Becky** in CA—terminal cancer; searching for the truth

**CHRONIC CONDITIONS**  
**Logan Corray; Addison Tope; Christian Harrod; Rocco Jr; Pat Wilkes**—asthma

**Bill Dennis**—heart issues  
**Autumn Hadders**—epilepsy; celiac disease

**Danielle Huelsman**—vertigo, CV syndrome  
**Kirk Johnson**—worsening MS; needs quick meals to heat up, like soup

**Menards**—aging; **Lloyd**, diabetes, weak;  
**Virginia**, macular degeneration; high BP

**Sandra Perry**—neuropathy from diabetes  
**Cheryl Reames**—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia

**Nell Free**—pacemaker, heart; back pain  
**Judy Sartin**—spinal stenosis; arthritis

**Judy and Mike Strand**—hepatitis treatment  
**Lynda Szymanski**—COPD, lung weakness

**Job concerns** **Linda Szymanski**

**Travel** Several return from Florida College Colorado Westcliffe Camp today: all the

**Boys; Kim Howell; Logan Corray; Owen Bredehoft; and Tyler, Danielle, and Hannah Huelsman.** **Pat Campbell** will be in AR until tomorrow with her father. The **Gintchins** are in Bulgaria.

**Congratulations** **Jordan Corray** recently received a Bachelor's of Business Management from CSU-Global Online.

sick or aging or distressed or inadequately trained employee.

- A Biblical elder will call public sin in the church to account and exercise discipline and even exclusion from the fellowship,

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**“Mercy and Truth Have Met Together,” Ps 85:10, from p. 3**

1 Cor 5:1-13, but will also remember the parable of the wheat and tares that teaches patience with the imperfection of the church till the end of the age, Mt 13:24-30.

**B. How Can We Know When to Show One or the Other?** If we ask, ‘How shall we know when to do justice and how to show mercy?’ we answer, by praying for wisdom, by getting as close to Jesus as we possibly can. There is no hard and fast rules in Scripture to dictate for every situation—and this is not an accident. The aim of Scripture is to produce a person like Christ, not to provide an exhaustive list of rules for every situation. This Beatitude says, *“Blessed are the merciful,”* not, *“Blessed are those who know exactly when and how to show mercy in all circumstances.”* We must be merciful people even when we must act with severity in the service of justice. That is, we must be

- poor in spirit,
- sorrowful for our own sin,
- meekly free from defensiveness and self-exaltation,
- hungering and thirsting for all that is right and just to be done,
- perceptive of a person's distress and misery,
- feeling pity for his pain, and
- making every effort to see the greatest good for the greatest number.

So the answer to our third question (Should a merciful person always show mercy?) is a qualified “no.” No, you will often support the claims of justice and recompense a person the way he deserves, in order to bear witness to the truth of God's justice and to accomplish a greater good for greater numbers of people. But it is a qualified “no” because if we are merciful, then even the way we spank a child or prosecute a criminal or dismiss an employee will be different. Our manner of justice will include mercy. The mercy will show. The parent may cry. The attorney may visit the criminal and his family. The heart of mercy and kindness will show.

**IV. What About Salvation by Grace through Faith?** Why will only merciful people find mercy from God in the judgment day, if salvation is by grace through faith? In other words, in the age to come when we meet God face to face, the ones who will receive mercy from Him are people who have been merciful. So do we earn His mercy by our mercy? No, because an “earned mercy” would be a contradiction in terms. If mercy is earned, it is not mercy, it's a wage, Rm 4:4-8. Be assured, if we get anything good at the judgment, it will be mercy, 100% mercy! When God asks for a record of our mercy at the judgment day, He will not be asking for a punched time card. We won't say, “Here it is. Eight hours of mercy. Now where's my wage?” Instead, God will ask for our medical charts. We will hand them to Him in all lowliness and meekness, and He will know the evidences of how we trusted Him as our Divine Physician, and how the medicine of His Word and the therapy of His Spirit took effect in our lives because we relied on Him to heal us of our unmerciful disposition. When He sees the evidence of our faith and His healing, He will complete our healing and welcome us into eternal life with Him forever. Therefore, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”* Mt 5:7, and *“God, be merciful to me, a sinner,”* Lk 18:13.  
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*Assembly Schedule*

**Sunday**

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

**Wednesday**

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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**Sunday morning**

• **adult Bible class**, Lessons from Deuteronomy, Larry Campbell

• **Sermon**, “Why We Do Not Pray Like Jesus,” Jim Reingrover

**Sunday afternoon**

• **Sermon**, “The Fruit of the Spirit is...Love, Applied” Jeff Wilkes

**Wednesday night adult Bible class**, Pearls from Proverbs, Jim Reingrover