

# Lighthouse Beacon

New Mexico Lighthouses - May 2003

## Are You A Blessing To Your World?

We continue our study of the *Beatitudes* (blessings) that Jesus revealed in Matthew 5:1-16 by focusing this month (and next) on the fifth blessing, found in verse 7, that of *mercy*. The Greek root for mercy (*eleeo*) and merciful (*eleemon*) is “*eleos*.” Thayer’s Greek Definitions describes this as “kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them.” The difference between pity and mercy is that while pity make us feel bad for someone in a miserable state of existence, mercy generates a response. Mercy requires effort, action, and, quite often, sacrifice. *For a Lighthouse, mercy is Caring in action*. But first we will learn that *merciful* means much more than just acts of mercy. For Jesus, *merciful* describes who we are, more than what we do. *Let Him Shine!* — KC

**“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Matthew 5:7**

### What is our condition?

The condition given here for us to receive mercy is that we must be merciful. At first glance this seems to be a statement that applies to anyone who does an act of mercy. But when carefully considered in the overall context of the preceding and following verses (as well as the rest of the Bible), this declaration can only apply to Christians. Only Christians can expect to receive the mercy spoken of in this verse.

What is this mercy? And why is it limited only to Christians? To answer these questions, we need to understand why mercy is needed and what Jesus meant when He said the merciful are blessed.

Mercy is needed in two types of situations. In the first instance, a person in need of mercy has done nothing wrong and is in a miserable condition through no fault of their own. An example of this is found in *John 9:1-7* when the disciples asked who had sinned to cause a man’s blindness. Jesus answered that no one

had sinned, but God would be glorified. Although no one had done wrong, this man had struggled through life in a miserable existence as a beggar. And while he received mercy in the form of compassion from those who helped him with his daily needs, his condition remained unchanged until he met Jesus. Through Christ, the man received a mercy that forever freed him from his misery and because of that, God was glorified.

Unfortunately, while we may not be physically afflicted like the blind man who depended upon the daily compassion and mercy of others just to survive, we are all in a very miserable spiritual condition, although many people do not realize it. *Romans 7:24* says that we are all spiritually miserable because we are filled with a sin nature that condemns us to death and eternal separation from God. And, like the blind man, we have no hope of changing this condition that we were born into.

By contrast, in the second situation the person needing mercy is guilty of committing a transgression (against God, a

...you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light — Eph. 5:8

person, an institution, etc.) and justice demands payment. They may receive mercy in the form of compassion from others, but their sentence must still be carried out. We can visit those who are in prison, comfort and encourage them, but we cannot free them from their punishment until the law has been satisfied.

Because of the first miserable condition, an inherited sin nature, everyone is also caught in the second miserable condition—we are all guilty of violating spiritual laws that demand a death sentence. Since Adam (*Romans 5:12*), every person (except Jesus) has “sinned and fallen short” (*Romans 3:23*) and is condemned to eternal destruction.

Therefore, everyone needs mercy because we all suffer from both conditions: we are victims of our sinful ancestry, and we are also grievous sinners that deserve God’s divine judgment. The misery of sin in this world came into being long before we were born and many people have suffered innocently because of it. And it draws each of us into sin and rebellion against God. So we all need mercy for our misery, and mercy for the forgiveness of our sin against the One who is the very Creator and Giver of mercy.

And, to be absolutely honest about it, the first type of mercy only has value after the second type of mercy has been received. Please carefully consider that a **mercy which makes our life more comfortable can be the very thing which lets**

**us ignore God by believing all is well. Conversely, the misery of life which draws us to God may well be the greatest gift we can receive** because it leads us to the mercy of forgiveness and an eternally changed life. Only after we have received His greatest mercy—the forgiveness obtained through the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice—can we begin to understand mercy and appreciate how it can so completely change a life trapped in misery.

Once we receive His mercy, we also start to understand what it means to be merciful. The “merciful” Jesus speaks of here is not someone who does acts of mercy. Ironically, even acts of mercy can be nothing more than acts of self-gratification and self-adulation. The Greek concept expressed here is a constant, ongoing, merciful nature and character. And it is not a self-focused, “do-this-because-it’s-a-good-thing-that-will-make-me-feel-better-about-myself” nor is it a “this-will-impress-God” (or others) mentality. Instead, this “merciful” is a God-centered, God-responsive, God-glorifying attitude. And it is only possible because the author of mercy indwells the Christian and reveals His mercy to a world in misery.

So our Lord is not describing the merciful by what we *do*, but rather He is revealing who we *are* because of Him in us. This is the true Christian condition described by Jesus when He said “*Blessed are the merciful...*” **Let Him Shine!**

(next month-Our Blessing & Our Response)

## “Turn On The Light, America!”

Mission America has begun a new initiative called “Turn on the Light, America!” to help get the word out about becoming a Lighthouse, both individually and as a church congregation. To assist in this new Lighthouse growth, they are developing resources and special events to help start and maintain millions of Lighthouses.

The site will also include weekly newsletters highlighting Lighthouse efforts and Christian activities throughout our nation. For more information or to sign up for their email-based national newsletter, visit <http://www.turnonthelight.org/>.