

A GUARENTEED INVESTMENT: MERCY
MATTHEW 5:7

INTRO.:

1. Ever since the latest recession began, a lot of people have been keeping a close eye on the stock market.
 - a. A few years back when the market began to slide many people were glued to the TV watching things like Fox Business network, or constantly checking what was happening to their portfolio almost on an hourly basis.
 - b. The fact is that most of us who have any kind of retirement program have some ties to the stock market, whether we realize it or not.
 - c. In fact many pension funds and retirement funds lost over half their value in just a few months.
 - 1) Investments that had been peddled by brokers for years as a sure thing, began to crumble and fall apart.
 - 2) Add to that such scandals as Enron, and you can quickly see the concern many people have.
 - d. Many people put their lifetime of savings into these retirement plans believing they would have a nice little nest egg to carry them through their golden years, but now they realize that uncertainty has landed at their door.
 - 1) We expect that because we have put all our hard earned money out, that we will receive it, multiplied many times over, back when we need it.
 - 2) So every time the stock market begins to go down it is understandable why everyone gets jittery.
 - a) We bite our nails.
 - b) We watch our retirement portfolios take a beating.
 - c) We watch all of our hard work go up in smoke.
 - d) And we learn firsthand that in this life there is no sure investment.
 - e. That is, except for one thing: Mercy.
2. As we come to the 5th beatitude in Matt. 5:7 Jesus said, "*Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.*"
 - a. ILLUST.: Some of you may have seen the classic commercial made by the investment firm - E. F. Hutton.
 - 1) In this commercial, you see a room full of people sitting around talking.
 - 2) In one corner, there is a conversation going on and someone says, "My broker is E. F. Hutton."
 - 3) At that point, the whole room becomes quiet and everybody leans forward and strains to hear what E. F. Hutton said.
 - b. As we look at this scripture, everyone sitting around is straining to hear what Jesus is saying.
 - c. And as we listen in, we hear Jesus giving us the best investment advice in the world.
 - d. He is telling us to invest in mercy, and when we do it will give unlimited returns.
3. But if you are a good investor, you have learned that before you invest in something, you first want to learn everything you can about it.
 - a. Then with that knowledge you can invest with knowledge and realistic expectations of what kind of return you will get.
 - b. This AM let us look at what Jesus is calling for us to invest in and the type of returns we can expect.

LESSON:

- I. Let us begin by looking at what Jesus calls us to invest in. – What is mercy?
- A. Before we look at what it is, let us notice some things that it is not.
1. Mercy is not emotionalism.
 - a. Just because a person sees a television commercial with starving children and sheds some tears and wants to help, does not necessarily mean that person is merciful.
 - b. Often when a person makes a decision or does something out of an emotional response, it is to alleviate the emotions they are feeling rather than out of a heart of mercy.
 - c. While it is true that those who are merciful will often experience deep emotions, just because a person is emotional, does not make them merciful.
 2. Mercy is not being humanitarian.
 - a. Sometimes we look at people who have given large amounts of money or aid to charities or people and we call them humanitarians and believe they are merciful.
 - b. But a person can be a humanitarian and not be merciful.
 - 1) Sometimes people do “good things” for selfish reasons rather than from a heart of mercy.
 - 2) It may be for a tax write-off, to look good in front of others, or for their own sense of feeling good.
 - c. But if one’s humanitarian efforts are not coming from a heart of love seeking to benefit the recipient, then it is not really mercy.
 - d. Paul put it this way in 1 Cor. 13:3: “*And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*”
 - 1) Paul says that even if a person gives everything to the poor, but they do not do it in love, they have gained nothing.
 - 2) They have not acted mercifully.
 - e. Again, just like with emotionalism, while being a humanitarian does not make you merciful, a merciful person will be a humanitarian.
 - f. Merciful people care about other people.
- B. What then is mercy?
1. A simple, but rich definition is that mercy is love in action.
 - a. It is more than just showing pity, or having a sympathetic feeling toward someone in distress.
 - b. It is taking positive action in order to help someone in distress.
 - c. It is getting out of the narrow confines of one’s selfish interests and moving into the larger world of caring for others and attempting to meet their real needs.
 2. Let us notice some Biblical examples of mercy:
 - a. The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37.
 - 1) Retell the story.
 - 2) In this parable the Samaritan was moved with compassion when he saw the half-dead man.
 - 3) But this compassionate feeling alone did not save the man’s life or relieve his distress.
 - a) Probably the priest and Levite had sympathetic feelings for the man’s poor condition.
 - b) ASK: How much value would just having a sympathetic feeling for the wounded man have been if none of the 3 had done anything positive to help him?
 - 4) In his work of mercy, the Samaritan showed himself to be merciful (bound wounds, etc.)
 - 5) This was a fact that even the lawyer recognized, for he said, “*The Samaritan showed him mercy.*” (vs. 37).
 - b. The man with the epileptic son.
 - 1) Matt. 17:15: “*Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water.*”
 - 2) When this man came to Christ, he wanted more than just sympathy or pity.
 - 3) He wanted action; he wanted his son healed and his misery removed.

- c. The praying publican.
 - 1) Luke 18:13: “*But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'*”
 - 2) In his prayer he desired more than just God’s pity because he had sinned.
 - 3) He wanted God’s action in the forgiveness of his sins.
- d. The 10 lepers.
 - 1) When these men cried, “*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.*” (Luke 17:13), what did they want?
 - a) Did they want Christ’s sympathy?
 - b) Did they want Christ to look at them with pity and say, “How sad?”
 - c) Or did they want Him to act and do something?
 - 2) They wanted action; they wanted to be healed.
- e. Mercy, then, means more than feeling sorry over the fact that people are destitute, starving, or hurting; it means doing something in a positive way to relieve their condition.
 - 1) It means more than praying, “Lord send missionaries;” it is being a missionary to our neighborhood.
 - 2) It means more than merely sending a check to the Jerusalem Leprosy Fund; it means seeking in an active way how to help those individuals.
- f. In Matt. 5:7 Jesus is describing a person whose whole life has changed from concentrating on themselves to going out to other people in need and helping them.
 - 1) The merciful person does not just give a few hand-outs; he gives himself/herself to other people.
 - 2) The merciful person does not just stop and help accident victims (which he will do); but he also seeks ways to be of service to others.
 - 3) The merciful person walks into every meeting of the church looking for:
 - a) Ways he can be of service to his Bro./Sis. In Christ.
 - b) Ways he can get involved in the lives of those who are visiting with the congregation.

II. As we talk about what it means to be merciful, the greatest example we have is looking at the life of Jesus Christ.

--Let us notice 4 things from the life of Christ that will help us to better understand what Jesus meant when He said we are to be merciful:

- A. 1st: Jesus always took the initiative.
 - 1. Jesus did not wait for someone to beat down His door, or ring His phone off the hook before He showed mercy.
 - 2. He did not wait until some tragedy occurred, and then seek to do something about it.
 - 3. Jesus took the initiative.
 - 4. And following His example, we need to take the initiative and let people know we want to be involved in their lives and helping them, and all this not just when a tragedy occurs.
 - 5. ASK:
 - a. Do your Bro./Sis. here in Montrose know you are available?
 - b. Do they know you are ready and willing to help them at any time whenever the need arises?
 - c. Have you done what Christ did and taken the initiative even before there was any apparent need?
 - 6. This is the way Christ showed His mercy.
- B. 2nd: Jesus gave His best to show His mercy.
 - 1. Jesus did not just:
 - a. Drop a \$1 in the Temple treasury.
 - b. Give some of his old, dirty, worn-out clothes away.
 - c. Or even give up to ½ of all that He had to show His mercy to others.
 - 2. He gave His all.
 - 3. He gave His live and thus set an example for us to follow.
 - 4. In 1 John 3:16 John shows what following this example means to us: (Read).
 - a. This is what it means to be merciful.
 - b. It is laying down my life for my brethren (Expand).

- C. 3rd: Jesus was not selective in who He showed mercy to.
1. So often we are tempted to be selective when it comes to bestowing mercy.
 - a. We are merciful with our friends, children, and esp. our grandchildren.
 - b. But there are so many other people in the world that we deem not eligible – They simply do not meet our qualifications.
 - 1) In Matt. 5:45 Jesus said of God: (Read).
 - 2) Then He adds: vs. 48: (Read).
 - 3) The point is that we are to be just like God.
 2. Jesus did not pick just a certain kind of people He would show mercy toward while excluding all others.
 - a. Christ reached out to all: the tax-collector, a woman in adultery, a rich young ruler, a Roman centurion whose servant was dying, and many others that His Jewish heritage said should be rejected.
 - b. His mercy went out in all directions.
 3. The Christian who is full of mercy will never withhold mercy from anyone because of who they are or what they have or have not done for you.
 4. Color, age, status, or personality made no difference to Christ, and it must not make any difference to us if we are going to follow Him.
- D. Finally, as we look at Christ's example, we find that to be merciful does not mean to be easy-going.
1. The world's definition of mercy is to be a nice, easy-going person who overlooks all kinds of sin.
 2. But to be merciful as Christ was merciful, means we must be willing to forgive while at the same time wanting the best for the other person.
 3. ILLUST.: Woman taken in adultery.
 - a. Jesus showed mercy when He said, "Your *sins are forgiven.*"
 - b. But He also showed He wanted the best for her when He said, "*Go and sin no more.*"
 4. Sometimes one of the most merciful things we can do for someone is to go to them and show them their sin, or error: Ja. 5:19-20: (Read).
 - a. If I sin against you and you ignore it in the name of showing mercy, it is not mercy that you have shown me as I am still in my sin.
 - b. The merciful thing to do is not to ignore the sin, but rather to:
 - 1) Come to me.
 - 2) Reveal the sin to me.
 - 3) When I repent, forgive me.
 - 4) And then get involved in my life so as to help me overcome that sin and any other temptations that may come my way.

III. Having looked at what mercy means and how it was demonstrated in Christ's life, the real question becomes, "How do I apply this principle to my everyday life? How do I demonstrate this word in action on a daily basis?"

--4 ways to evaluate yourself and see how merciful you really are:

- A. 1st: If I am merciful, I will be patient with those who are different.
1. That is a nice way to say, I will be helpful even to those who are oddballs.
 2. You can evaluate yourself on how merciful you are by asking, "How do I treat those who are different? Those who are a little odd?"
 3. In 1 Thess. 5:14 Paul said showing mercy involves patience: "*And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.*"
 4. In Rom 15:7 Paul said: "*Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.*"
 - a. Merciful people are accepting people.
 - b. They are not quick to judge or criticize those who are different or have a different viewpoint or opinion.
 - c. They realize that many time hurtful people are people that are hurting and need patience and acceptance.

- B. 2nd: If I am merciful, I will forgive those who have fallen.
1. Ask yourself: "When someone makes a mistake, how do you treat them? Do you rub it in, or rub it out?"
 2. In Col. 3:13 Paul said, "*Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.*"
 - a. The interesting thing about forgiveness is that when you are called to receive it, it is so easy and feels so good.
 - b. But when you are called to give it, it is so hard and feels so wrong.
 - c. When we are sinned against it is not natural for us to show mercy, we want justice.
 3. A merciful person is one who can forgive the fallen.
 - a. And that does not just apply to those who have sinned against you but to those who have made mistakes that you just cannot understand.
 - b. All of us have vulnerable areas to temptation.
 - 1) Maybe you cannot understand how someone can have an ego problem, but they do not get why you struggle with gossip.
 - 2) Maybe you cannot conceive how anyone could ever take drugs, but they cannot fathom your inability to deal with greed.
 - c. How do you treat the fallen?
 - d. Merciful people do not point a finger, they lend a helping hand.
- C. 3rd: If I am merciful, I will help those who are hurting.
1. Solomon said: Prov. 3:27: "*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.*"
 - a. Remember that mercy is love in action.
 - b. Mercy is offering practical assistance.
 2. John put it this way in 1 John 3:17-18: "*But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*"
 - a. John is very pointedly saying that we do not have God's love if we have an opportunity to help someone in need and we do not.
 - b. The point is that when someone is hurting the merciful person does not mind getting involved.
 - c. In fact Paul said: Gal. 6:10: "*So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*"
 3. In the 5th beatitude Jesus was saying that happy, or blessed are those who get involved.
- D. 4th: If I am merciful, I will do good even to my enemies.
1. In Luke 6:33-36 Jesus said: (Read).
 2. A tangible mark of maturity and mercy is when you can do good to your enemies.
 3. That is exactly the opposite of what the world says.
 - a. The world says, "When people hurt you, hurt them back."
 - b. The world says, "I don't get mad, I get even."
 4. On the other hand God says, we are not to be a reactor, but an actor.
 - a. Mercy is action, not reaction.
 - b. Mercy is not only forgiving them, but also doing them good.
 5. In Rom. 12:17-21 Paul sums up this point so well when He said: (Read).

- IV. In the final part of the 5th beatitude we find that when we have this attitude of mercy, then Christ promised, “*We will obtain mercy.*”
- A. Christ said that if we will show mercy to others, God will show mercy to us.
1. As we pour out our life for others, He will pour out His life for us.
 2. As we empty our jar of mercy into the lives of others, God promises to keep filling our jar back up with His never ending supply of mercy.
 3. The simple fact is that the only true sound investment is mercy.
 4. When we invest in mercy – that is, when we are merciful – we will discover that its dividends far outweigh any other investment returns we could have.
- B. Let me hasten to add here that the mercy we receive is coming from God and not from those we are showing mercy toward.
1. Many think that if I am merciful, then others will treat me in the same way.
 2. But that is not what Christ promised here.
 3. Many Christians will pour out their jars of mercy time after time on others, and never receive an ounce of it back from them in return.
 - a. For example, of the 10 lepers Christ healed, 9 never returned to say, “Thank you.”
 - b. If we limit our mercy just to those who are merciful to us, then we do not have the mercy of Christ.

CONC.:

1. This AM as you make an inventory of your life – do you see the type of mercy Christ described here present in your life?
2. If not, our prayer is that this lesson will drive you back to the first beatitude.
 - a. That you will again become poor in spirit and say, “I cannot do it on my own.”
 - b. That you will mourn over your sins.
 - c. That you will become meek and let God teach you.
 - d. And finally that you will dig into God’s word and find in it how to be merciful to others.