



Showing Mercy

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
(Matthew 5:7 NIV)*

Mercy is . . .

Mercy is the Good Samaritan letting himself be interrupted by the half dead Hebrew traveler on a dangerous, winding road; and then pouring oil & wine on his wounds; and then paying for lodging; and then offering to pay for any of the victim's future expenses. The New Testament Greek words for oil and mercy are very close; they stem from the same root. The idea is the compassionate display of love for someone else's hurt at one's own expense. Mercy has four qualities in this parable, all stated in Luke 10:33-34, "*But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.*"

1. Mercy sees the need. ("And when he saw him.")
2. Mercy feels the hurt. ("He took pity on him.")
3. Mercy takes action to meet the need. ("He went to him and bandaged his wounds.").
4. Mercy does this to an enemy—by religion and by race. ("But a Samaritan"). A half-breed Hebrew with distorted religious beliefs stops to help the Hebrew who hates him.

Mercy sees, feels, and acts lovingly in the face of pain, misery, and distress. Like oil from a flask, mercy is "unscrewing the lid of what is important to me and pouring it over you so that you may feel its healing balm." (Howell 2006, 64)

Mercy and grace are similar in that both are undeserved. "Jesus' righteousness the unrighteous are granted, as a gift, relationship with God: a free gift. Mercy took a human face." --Walter Wangerin

Why mercy matters . . .

Every human heart needs mercy.

No one is so perfect, so free from error, possessed of so much power that the need for mercy will not on some occasion exist. The soldier needs mercy when before his king but the king needs mercy when before his surgeon. The failing student needs mercy before the teacher, the teacher before the principal; the principal before the superintendent; the superintendent before the school board; and the school board before the unhappy parents and taxpayers. The question isn't, "Who needs mercy?" Rather, "How soon? How often? How much?" (Kalas 2008, 54)

Don't you crave mercy? To be loved despite your craziness; to be handled tenderly? Don't we need to be tender and merciful, forgiving others? We are such hard, tough, cool, smooth, crusty people, but how sad. How tragic. Blessed are merciful for they shall receive mercy. We are not open to mercy so we are not so merciful and so we receive no mercy. (Howell 2006, 63)

"Mercy liberates me from the tedious weight of my own miserable little ego in a way that is profoundly fulfilling." --Wendy Farley

Mercy is in the heart of God. Mercy hung on the Cross, paying our sin debt.

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13 NIV)

What mercy looks like . . .

OFFER FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO HAVE HURT ME, AND MAKE AMENDS FOR HARM I'VE DONE TO OTHERS, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD HARM THEM OR OTHERS. (Baker 2007, 166)

Failure to show mercy is evidence that I have yet to repent and personally cry out for mercy. The unrepentant alcoholic hates all the other alcoholics. The unrepentant sinner hates other sinners. The unmerciful fail to see their own sin in the mirror. Either the misery of un-mercy or the peace of Christ will rule your heart. Which will it be? "[Mercy] binds you with far stronger cords than the cords of duty or obligation can bind you. [Mercy] is free, but when once you take it, you are bound forever to the Giver and bound to catch the spirit of the Giver. Like produces like. [Mercy makes you merciful.] Grace makes you gracious, the Giver makes you give." --E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973)