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## An Act of Kindness is Easy to Recognize

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The fifth Beatitude in our series is, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."



After I graduated from college, I chose to share a year of my life working in a multi-racial agency in New Jersey for emotionally broken children ages 5 to 16.

On one of my free weekends, I went into Manhattan on a double date. We four walked down the street together through the Bowery headed to Greenwich Village.

I was shocked to see a man lying on the sidewalk near the curb; his balding head was injured and bleeding. I said to my date, "Can we stop and help him?"

He said in measured tones, "Keep walking and do not look at him. He's just a drunk." I was saddened by the situation but no one seemed to care.

This is obviously not a good example of being merciful.

In contrast to the incident in New York is the Bible story of "The Good Samaritan."

It goes like this. Jesus had just finished speaking to the crowd on the two-part Great Commandment that concludes with the admonition, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

A man wanting to justify himself asked, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus responded with an example:

One sunny afternoon a man walked from Jerusalem to Jericho and was cruelly attacked by a group of thieves. He was wounded, stripped of clothing, and left to die. Two people – a priest and then a Levite – passed by on the other side of the road.

The third man, a Samaritan, acted like a neighbor to this stranger. With concern he knelt down and used his oil and wine from his saddlebag to clean and bandage the wounds.

The good neighbor then put the wounded man on his own animal and brought him to the nearest inn. The Samaritan stayed overnight and paid the innkeeper the next day. As he was leaving, he told the innkeeper he would be back again to pay for further expenses.

Jesus asks, "Who of these three do you think was neighbor to him?" – (Luke 10:36)

The questioner was caught, "He who showed mercy on him."

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise'" – (Luke 10:37).

Perhaps Jesus was thinking about the Good Samaritan experience when He gave what we now call the Fifth Beatitude. "Blessed are the merciful ..."

Mercy (*chesed*, Hebrew) is also translated as loving-kindness, "unfailing love" or "steadfast covenant love," and is similar to the NT word "grace" – (Spirit-filled Life Bible).

God gets blamed for many of the bad things that go on in the world. As a consequence some may erroneously think God is

not a merciful God. This attitude keeps many people away from God and His house.

A good antidote is to: get a Bible concordance, look up the word "mercy" and read the many verses. Mark the ones that speak to you. My favorite concordance, Strong's, gives 228 verses about mercy.

I was impressed to see that Psalm 136 has 26 verses in it and with each one there is this constant refrain: "For His mercy endures forever." Pretty powerful words.

After you read this refrain 26 times, you might get the point God is trying to make! He is a God of mercy and He loves you.

The second part of the Beatitude is: "They will receive mercy." Mercy is a gift but you have to receive it.

### A Prayer of Mercy

"I reach out my hands to You Lord and say, 'Yes, I joyfully receive Your gift of mercy. Thank You so much for being merciful to me.'

"Now help me be merciful to others. I want to be a 'Good Samaritan' on this road of life. Amen."

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