

SUNDAY 11 JULY 2021
A BETTER LIFE (5) TRUE GODLINESS
MATTHEW 5:1-7



WELCOME AND NOTICES:

See Mark's July letter
Looking to the week ahead:
Quiz night: Tuesday 13th July at 7.30 pm
via Zoom, with Roger and Sheila Hinton as
quizmasters.
Wednesday communion service 14th July
reverts to its usual time of 10.00 am.
Next Sunday, 18th July, Vicky and John
Dyson are bringing their son Jack for a
service of thanksgiving.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

The Lord God has told us what is right and
what he demands: 'See that justice is
done, let mercy be your first concern, and
humbly obey your God.'
Hosea 6:8 (CEV)

SONG: Just as I am

<https://youtu.be/wrNfaqZa8PI>

**Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!**

**Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each
spot
O Lamb of God I come! I come!**

**I come broken to be mended
I come wounded to be healed
I come desperate to be rescued
I come empty to be filled
I come guilty to be pardoned
By the blood of Christ the Lamb
And I'm welcomed with open arms
Praise God, just as I am**

**Just as I am, I would be lost
But mercy and grace my freedom bought
And now to glory in Your cross
O Lamb of God I come! I come!**

**I come broken to be mended
I come wounded to be healed
I come desperate to be rescued
I come empty to be filled
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Praise God, just as I am
Just as I am**

OPENING PRAYER

Father, we pray that you would light a
spark of true forgiveness and mercy in our
hearts towards all those that have harmed
or hurt us, whether deliberately or
unintentionally, knowing that it is not only
your will for us to show godly mercy
towards others but also that we become
equal beneficiaries when our hearts are
flooded with mercy and forgiveness. Root
out we pray, any lingering bitterness or
malice that is lurking within our hearts
and may the godly fruit of mercy and love
bud and blossom into the true fruit of
righteousness, to your honour and glory.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ
our Lord, **Amen.**

CONFESSION

Father God, you take our confession,
offered with hands outstretched, and
gently, like the loving heavenly Father that
you are, put it to one side to be forgotten.
No grudges, no itching for judgement, no
resentment or ill-will. Not like us, who

find it so easy to say sorry but so hard to forgive absolutely.

Let us say together a prayer for forgiveness.

Forgive us, Father, that we are often more willing to accept forgiveness than to forgive; more willing to accept your love, than to share it with those who have hurt us. Teach us to forgive, as you forgive us; through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Merciful Lord, grant to your faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Abundant God, we offer you these gifts in gratitude for your steadfast guidance in our lives. We pray that these resources will provide ministries to the suffering, food to the hungry, hope to the poor, and a spiritual presence to the needy. In the name of the one who suffered for our sake, Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

SONG: I could sing of your love forever
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDMH6y22sWE>

**Over the mountains and the sea
Your river runs with love for me
And I will open up my heart
And let the Healer set me free
I'm happy to be in the truth
And I will daily lift my hands
For I will always sing
Of when Your love came down.**

**I could sing of Your love forever
I could sing of Your love forever**

**I could sing of Your love forever
I could sing of Your love forever**

**Oh I feel like dancing
It's foolishness I know
But when the world has seen the light
They will dance with joy like we're dancing now.**

**I could sing of Your love forever
I could sing of Your love forever
I could sing of Your love forever
I could sing of Your love forever**

READING: Matthew 5:1-7

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them. He said:

³ 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

SERMON: A BETTER LIFE (5)

True Godliness

The title of this message today is 'True Godliness.' What are the images that enter your mind when someone uses the word godly? For some the word has negative connotations, of people who are not allowed to go to the cinema or to a dance or to drink alcohol or wear makeup or jewellery or watch TV. The preacher R.T. Kendall was brought up in such a home, and he said that even though he cherished the prayer life of his parents, he

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found that some of the so-called godly people in his church growing up were some of the meanest, hardest, most unloving and dull people on the face of the earth. So, what is true godliness? Well, true godliness in a nutshell is being like God himself, and God is merciful. After all he sent his Son into the world to show us mercy and forgive us our sins.

We have seen over the last few weeks that there is a logical sequence in the Beatitudes, and today's verse is no exception. If we are poor in spirit, then we will mourn our state before God and humble ourselves before him. In humility we will want more of God and so we will hunger and thirst for righteousness, desiring to be close to God. If you hunger and thirst for God and say to him, "I'll do anything you want" God will test the sincerity of our words, and today's beatitude is the first test of whether or not you are serious about hungering for more of God. Sometimes the way he tests us is seeing how we respond when someone hurts you or has let you down or been unpleasant. You can seek revenge or you can show mercy and forgive. When you are gracious to those who have hurt you, to those who have been unkind or unfair, you are showing just how much you want God. But when you seek to punish them or make them feel guilty, it shows you don't desire God as much as you think you do.

In the Special Air Forces they have a saying: 'Never complain, never explain, never apologise.' This may be useful in the

special forces, but this is certainly not true godliness. True godliness is showing graciousness even when it hurts. That's what Jesus means by being merciful. Showing mercy is not reminding people of their faults or their failures or reminding them of the past. It is refusing to throw the book at them, even if they deserve it. Instead of guilt-tripping someone for what they did, it is setting them free with forgiveness and leaving all judgement to God.

Being merciful is what God does with us. Being merciful is not giving people what they deserve but giving them what they don't deserve. 'Mercy triumphs over justice' (James 2:13). So when you show mercy, you are being godly. Have you ever found that some so-called 'godly' people can be quite harsh, legalistic and judgemental, but God, who is the only one entitled to be harsh and legalistic prefers to show mercy. Should we not do the same?

Do you remember when Joseph rose to prominence in Egypt and his brothers came because of famine in Israel? He could have enacted revenge but instead we read he showed mercy. "Come close to me," he said to them, and broke down and wept. Joseph was merciful. He forgave his brothers. He saw God's bigger plan at work. 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives' (Genesis 50:20).

To be merciful is to act supernaturally. If we ourselves have been shown mercy,

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then surely we should do the same. Do you remember the parable of the unmerciful servant. Jesus wanted his hearers to know something about God and his mercy. In the parable the master takes the initiative in cancelling the debt. Jesus said, "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants" (Matthew 18:23). When a servant who owed him a huge sum came to him, the king had mercy on him and cancelled his considerable debt, yet the servant went out and was unmerciful to his own servant who owed very little. Jesus ended this parable with the words of the master, "You wicked servant. I cancelled that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow-servant just as I had on you?" In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.' Jesus finished his teaching with these words, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (Matt. 18:32-35). The preacher to the Vatican, Raniero Cantalamessa says of this, 'Grace always come first, and it is what creates our obligation to respond.' God shows mercy and expects us to do the same.

Showing mercy is like oil in a car. If you drive your car without oil it will catch on fire because of the friction. Like oil, mercy neutralises friction between people. The world needs the oil of mercy. This world would be a better place if only we all acted with mercy.

Is there someone you are harbouring resentment against, someone you won't forgive? It's time to show mercy, just as you have been shown mercy. The greatest breakthrough you will ever have is to tear up the record of wrongs and forgive. Show mercy not because someone deserves it, but because they don't. When you show mercy, you enter into a deeper relationship with God, you enter into the Father's blessing because you are doing his will. You are treating others as God has treated you, you are passing on the blessing you yourself have received.

In Luke 6:36 Jesus said, "Be merciful as your Father is merciful." And in James 4:17 we read, "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." So, in this beatitude, Jesus motivates us to show mercy by the promise that we also will be shown mercy. The way Jesus is showing us to be is the way God already is. Godliness is showing mercy, and showing mercy is being like God. To some, however, godliness will always have the thought of harsh, judgemental and dull Christians. How do we change their views? By being merciful, by pouring out the oil of mercy in abundance.

I conclude with the words of King David in Psalm 23, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life' (v6). May we be a people who exhibit true godliness by showing the kind of mercy that we ourselves have already been shown in Jesus Christ.

SONG: All my days

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSm6fdZHI5Q>

**All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
Give my praise to the Fountain of delights;
For in my helplessness You heard my cry,
And waves of mercy poured down on my life.**

**I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails;
Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
Of death defeated and life without end.**

**Beautiful Saviour, Wonderful Counsellor,
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
You're the Risen One, heaven's Champion
And You reign, You reign over all.**

**I long to be where the praise is never-ending,
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades;
Where countless worshippers will share one song,
And cries of 'worthy' will honour the Lamb!**

**Beautiful Saviour, Wonderful Counsellor,
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
You're the Risen One, heaven's Champion
And You reign, You reign over all.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

These are responsive prayers. Each prayer will end with the words, 'Lord, in your mercy', to which the response is 'Hear our prayer.'

**Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer**

Let us pray.

Everlasting God, we are gathered together in love and fellowship; hear us now as we bring before you our cares and our needs. And so we pray for your church throughout the world, for Christians everywhere meeting in small house groups, in rural and town churches and in great city cathedrals. Grant that we and all your people may be built up in our faith and show in our lives the love we see in Jesus.

**Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer**

Lord God, we give you thanks for our church here in Bowthorpe. We pray for all who minister and preach and who enlarge and enrich our understanding of God and help us to respond to his love. Inspire our leaders and preachers, who are stewards of your truth, to turn our disobedient hearts to you, so that when Christ comes again to be our judge we may stand with confidence before his glory.

**Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer**

Holy God, we pray for Christians working in places of power and influence who make decisions which affect the lives of so many people. We ask you to bless those who work in politics, in the media, in advertising and in the financial markets. May they all know what to say and how to act for the benefit of all people and at all times to be true and faithful to you.

**Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer**

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Father God we pray for those whom we love, family and friends who are the special people in our lives, wherever they may be. We pray for their hopes, their fears, their problems and their needs but most of all we thank you for each one of them and for what they give and mean to us. And we raise before you now all those who we know who need to touch the hem of Jesus' garments and receive health and healing in their lives, especially those affected in any way by Coronavirus.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Faithful God, we pray for all who sing a sad song today; the grieving, the lonely, the lost and the bereaved. We pray especially for those who have lost their voice and feel silenced or oppressed. May we bring light into dark places, restore hope and vision to all who struggle, and bring well-being and comfort to all who suffer. And we commit into your caring hands those who have died and we pray for all who are mourning the loss of a loved one.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Gracious God, we have laid before you our cares, our concerns and our needs; now we offer you our thanks and praise for all the blessings and gifts you lavish on us. In the weeks ahead help us to keep the faith as deeply and passionately as those who heard Jesus preach and teach on the mountainside.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.**
Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

THE PEACE

Christ is our peace. Therefore, receive his peace and share it with others.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord is here

His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and good, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give You thanks, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ the King of glory.

Born of a woman, He came to the rescue of our human race. Dying for us, He trampled death and conquered sin. By the glory of His resurrection He opened the way to life eternal and by His ascension,

gave us the sure hope that where He is we may also be. Therefore the universe resounds with joy and with choirs of angels we sing for ever to your praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord, send your Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break may be for us the Body of Christ, and the cup we share may be for us the Blood of Christ. May we and all who share this food offer ourselves to live for you, and be welcome at your eternal feast where all creation worships you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, **we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread, and after he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup and gave it to them saying, "This cup is the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me."

RECEIVING OF COMMUNION

God's holy gifts for God's holy people.
**Jesus Christ is holy, Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

The Body of Christ keep you in eternal life.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**Lord, we have broken your bread
and received your life.
By the power of your Spirit
keep us always in your love**

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG: Mercy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vcps8EQUOt4>

**I will kneel in the dust
At the foot of the cross,
Where mercy paid for me.
Where the wrath I deserve,
It is gone, it has passed.
Your blood has hidden me.**

**Mercy, mercy,
As endless as the sea.
I'll sing Your hallelujah
For all eternity.**

**We will lift up the cup
And the bread we will break,
Remembering Your love.
We were fallen from grace,
But You took all our shame
And nailed it to a cross.**

**Mercy, mercy,
As endless as the sea.
I'll sing Your hallelujah
For all eternity.**

**Mercy, mercy,
As endless as the sea.
I'll sing Your hallelujah
For all eternity.**

**May I never lose the wonder,
Oh, the wonder of Your mercy.
May I sing Your hallelujah.
Hallelujah, Amen.
May I never lose the wonder,
Oh, the wonder of Your mercy.
May I sing Your hallelujah.
Hallelujah, Amen.
(repeat x2)**

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**I will kneel in the dust
At the foot of the cross,
Where mercy paid for me.**

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

May God the Father prepare your journey,
Jesus the Son guide your footsteps, the
Spirit of Life strengthen your body, the
Three in One watch over you, on every
road that you may follow.

Amen.

And now may the blessing of God
Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit, be
with us and all those we love, all those we
care for, and all those we pray for, this
day and ever more, **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.