

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
August 21, 2016

Blessed Are The Merciful

Matthew 5:3-7

5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5:5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

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

1. Outside or Inside

There are two kinds of state of well-being. One is “happiness”. This means that something good happens around you, and that makes you feel happy. Many people think about this kind of happiness when they think about “being happy”, and they are looking for this type of happiness. However, it is not always the case that something good happens all the time. The happenings around you have always changed. Many things happen in a day. In a morning, you started the morning with good feeling but met the irritating event in the noon and come back home with depressed feeling. If you rely on the happenings around you, you can not find the long lasting happiness since there are too many ups and downs.

However, other kind of state of well-being, “blessedness” means that even if something good does not happen around you, or something bad happens around you, it supports you in the situation.

Jesus declared “blessedness” to “poor”, “mourn”, “meek or people who are despised”, “hunger and thirst for righteousness or people who are not treated equally”. “Blessedness” declared by Jesus is not affected by the situation of the people or the surrounding situation of the people. This “blessedness” is the treasure of the poor, comfort that wipes off the tears of mourn, glory for the despised, and satisfaction given to ones whom their insistence is not accepted. This “blessedness” you can not receive it by your own effort, the world does not give it to you, you can receive this grace from God, blessing from heaven. Then, it will not be robbed by someone.

Jesus said, “So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” (John 16:22) The “blessedness” that Jesus declared is put in deeper inside of our soul by God, and it does not change by the influence of the environment surrounding you.

Even with having faithfulness and knowing God’s words, we loose sight of the blessedness, get upset for unfavorable events, complain about it, and depressed in it. However, in that situation, when you look up at God, you notice the blessing from the heaven, which you can not receive from the earthy things, is given by God. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you know that it has already been given. We shall look for the blessing that is not changed by the surrounding environment. Then, every time you look up at God, Lord declares “you are the blessed” and receive the blessing from him.

2. Passive orActive

Happiness comes from environmental factors; on the other hand

blessedness is given to inside of believers. So, it could be said that “happiness” is passive fortune, but “blessedness” is active and powerful enough to encourage people for change the situation. Blessedness that given from Jesus, doesn’t only support you suffering from something, but also give people around you the courage to change something, when they likewise suffer from the hard situation. The eight blessings of the Beatitude proclaimed by Jesus are all active.

The poor in spirit are satisfied with the heavenly treasure that are invisible, and also could enrich others’ soul. Those who mourn are not only be comforted but also could share the comfort with others; because those who receive the heavenly comfort can be compassionate for people in pain and sorrow; moreover express the truthful comfort. Likewise, the meek will inherit the glorious rewards and also rejoice them with others. If people hunger and thirst for righteousness, they will be satisfied as it’s written and be able to give the healing to others, too. When you recognize that Jesus is the one who satisfies people’s thirst in spirit, you can deliver the message of the healing and satisfaction coming from Jesus Christ within joyfulness.

Today, we learn the fifth blessedness, the one in merciful people. “Mercy” is the actual thing outward, so I would say this blessedness is the most active in the proclaimed blessedness.

Jesus took every chance to teach people to be merciful, and so was He. He does various miracles, to achieve the prophecy in the Bible, and testify that He is the promised Savior; but He moved because of His mercifulness, in fact. When a leper came to Jesus, He “moved

with pity,” and “stretched out his hand and touched him,” and cleansed him (Mark 1:41). When he fed 5,000 people, as well, he did it from his mercy. Mark 6:34 says, “He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.”

When Jesus showed His mercy, scribes and Pharisees came and complained against Jesus. Then Jesus answered and admonished them, in Matthew 9:13, “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’” As Matthew 23:23 describes, “Scribes and Pharisee have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness,” even though they passionately keep their lives in delicate, over-judgmental regulations.

The parable of “Good Samaritan” is very famous and you must know it already. Through this parable Jesus taught that the core of Father’s law is mercy. Jesus introduced Samaritan in this parable, but Judea people have hatred of Samaritan at this time. They even abominated Samaritan more than the heathen, according to historical evidences. However, Jesus said, neither presbyter nor Levite helped the Judea victim, who was actually dying sooner or later, and Samaritan rescued the Judea man. Then He asked scribes, in Luke 10:36, “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He answered in Luke 10:37, “The one who showed him mercy,” he said so because he didn’t want to say “Samaritan was.” As it’s written, “show him mercy” means, “express him mercy.” So we could analyze that the scribe answered Jesus and unconsciously recognized that law is all about mercy.

Jesus knows the scribe reached the right answer, and said to him in Luke 10:37, “You go, and do likewise.” Jesus said, “Go!” He also said

“Go and learn about mercy.” (Matthew 9:13) “Go!” But, where should he go? To the real world, his ordinal life. Jesus said that we cannot learn the mercy by just academic research, but by practicing mercy in actual life. “Blessed is those who merciful” could be said, the mercy inside you will outreach and change others through the blessedness.

3. Receive and Give

There are two kinds of people in this world: one is like a thermometer and the other is like a thermostat. A thermometer works according to temperature changes and when it goes up, it goes up and when it goes down, it goes down and the reading is driven by environment. A thermostat kicks in and turns on an A/C when the temperature goes up and it turns on a heater when the temperature goes down and maintains the room at a certain temperature. Which people do we belong to? Are we always influenced by what is happening around us and go up and down? Or do we have a life with internal strength and make people feel warm or give them a nice breeze? The blessedness of those who are mercy is to act like a thermostat to the people surrounding them.

But can we really act as a thermostat? Of course we cannot do it by ourselves. A thermostat cannot warm up or cool down a room by itself. It is the A/C or heater that can do that. A thermostat is connected to the A/C or heater and uses its power to control the room temperature. Likewise, unless we are connected to Jesus Christ and receive His power, we cannot to anything. We cannot change others or cannot show mercy to them.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

The blessedness that merciful receives is mercy. Those who give mercy will receive mercy. You don't reduce mercy when you give to others, but rather you amplify mercy. Even if you don't receive mercy from others, God will hold you in mercy if you give mercy to others. As a matter of fact, it was God who first gave us mercy. We can give mercy because we know we receive mercy from God.

Mercy is a love toward the small, weak, and suffers. God's love is all merciful love. God who is bigger than the universe and utterly holy loves sinful humans and pours love into us. His love is nothing but merciful love. Even though we, humans, go against God and torture ourselves, He does not abandon us.

We cannot argue back even if God says, "what goes around comes around. You obviously suffer", but God loves us and pours mercy into us.

The Bible praises God's mercy everywhere. For example, Psalm 86:15 says "But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." The believers had been always seeking for His mercy. Psalm 86:16 says, "Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant."

There is an old prayer called "Jesus Prayer". It prays as follows: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." People used to repeat this prayer over and over again within a day. In addition,

In ancient churches, the worship service used to start with prayer of "Kyrie eleison", meaning "Christ, mercy on me." The believers remembered by praying this prayer that they were saved and given the

life earnestly through mercy of God. They had been changed into a person who showed mercy to others by richly receiving God's mercy. Blessedness of the merciful begins with God's mercy and returns to God's mercy. Through the worship service this morning, we would like to see our merciful God and be filled with His mercy and able to work in His mercy.

(Prayer)

Dear merciful God the Father, our true blessedness is your blessings that we receive deep in our heart. Father, please protect us, lead us and help us so that we can change where we are into a place of mercy with your blessings. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.