

## **Beatitudes for the Workplace #5**

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy*

Following is Jesus' fifth of nine Beatitudes (Mt. 5: 3-11) about God's presence in our daily lives and work. Each Beatitude remains as relevant for us, today, as it did, long ago.

Preamble & Context:

*Blessed...* in Jesus of Nazareth's time, meant 'good things.' These included vitality, health, longevity, fertility – highly prized benefits, then and now.

*Mercy...* has acquired different meanings over time. Nowadays, it is understood as withholding punishment. While that explanation is helpful, Jesus' use of *mercy* is different.

The Old and New Testaments record *mercy* as a spiritual value, requiring action. It expresses God's passion for sharing everything in Creation, equitably with everyone. God's passion carries urgency and is an imperative for God's people to practice. Rather than being *reactive* (withholding punishment), therefore, *mercy* is *proactive* (practicing God's passion and commitment for inclusiveness). Where God's will is thwarted, God and God's *mercy* act, redeeming what is broken or absent.

Application:

Jesus taught and practiced *mercy* throughout his earthly ministry. He treated everyone with dignity and respect, demonstrating God's inclusive love, care and generosity for everyone. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, encouraged the down-trodden, and preached God's unconditional love for everyone. Whether shepherd or centurion, rabbi or sinner, wealthy person or poor, Jesus showed *mercy* to everyone.

Whenever anyone tried to interfere with his ministry (as the Pharisees often did), Jesus responded with passion and immediate action. Jesus' responses to Pharisaic behavior are legendary (eg., Matthew 23: 13-15, 23, 25, 27, 29), demonstrating his commitment to *mercy*.

So What:

Appreciating *mercy* begins with recognizing that we are beings. *Mercy* is a quality of being – of who we are as God's people. As beings, we know that we can have many roles, titles and jobs in the workplace, each referring to what we do. Jesus calls us to *be merciful* in everything *we do*. Recognizing the difference between being and doing helps us appreciate what Jesus is talking about.

Whether as consumers, workers, or investors, there are infinite ways we can be merciful – treating people equally, and striving for equitable distribution of God's blessings. We can do this through outreach and 'inreach.' A few outreach examples include mentoring young people; giving a disadvantaged person an opportunity to work; donating resources (time, talents and treasure) to those less fortunate than us

(food banks, women's and men's shelters, etc); supporting community initiatives to help make life better for its citizens. Jesus is always ready to inspire us with ideas to practice being merciful via outreach.

'Inreach' includes how we treat other people, whether we are consuming, making or providing a product or service. This can be difficult – especially when a person or organization is belligerent, unreasonable, etc. Jesus always stands ready to help us to be merciful – patient, calm, strong – in separating 'issues' from 'people.' Sometimes, of course, we have to be firm in difficult situations with people – but, we can do this Jesus' way...and expect him to help us do it!

These outreach and inreach ideas are by no means exhaustive. May they point each of us in the direction of Jesus, and his call to us to be merciful. As Jesus is always merciful to us, may we be his thoughts, feelings and actions, applying mercy to others.

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