



Channels of Mercy

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The story is told of a poor disabled person who was invited to a meal with the queen. Not accustomed to high class meal protocols, this person used a wrong cutlery for the meal. When the queen noticed that, she quietly dropped her cutlery and then picked the wrong set, mirroring this poor fellow's, so as to save his / her face from embarrassment. God could not be less courteous than an earthly monarch.

In contemporary times, most would agree that it is good to be merciful to others. However, when Jesus spoke these words, the cultural situation were different, for example:

- 1) The Romans despised pity, therefore, being merciful was rather exception.
- 2) The Pharisees were also very judgmental to others and showed little mercy. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for not showing mercy (Matthew 23:23).

These could also be due to the common perception, that suffering was the result and deserving punishment of personal sin.

Mercy is a compassionate, helpful, kind, giving and forgiving disposition towards the weak, sick, poor and less privileged people and others in general. Such disposition towards others bring peace into relationships and opens the channel for answered prayers, as taught in the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). 2 Samuel 22:26 and Psalms 18:25 both remind us that as we are merciful to others, so our Heavenly Father will be merciful with us! Similarly Jesus illustrated this in His teachings "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:31-46).

Being Merciful is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, kindness (Galatians 5:22), that outwardly expresses itself through action based on emotion.

“With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright” (2 Samuel 22:26; Psalms 18:25).

You cannot truly be merciful or compassionate to someone, unless you really do something about it. It is not merely feeling bad about someone's situation, it is an emotion which prompts one to act on it.

Being merciful does not always mean joining charitable or some social justice organisations, but it involves showing compassion to those are around us, with a kind word, a smile or other acts of kindness. The following are some of the ways to be merciful to others.

- 1 Feeding the Hungry
- 2 Giving drink to the thirsty
- 3 Clothing the naked
- 4 Sheltering the homeless
- 5 Comforting the imprisoned
- 6 Visiting the sick
- 7 Burying the dead
- 8 Admonishing sinners
- 9 Instructing the uninformed
- 10 Counselling the doubtful
- 11 Comforting the sorrowful
- 12 Being patient with those in error
- 13 Forgiving offenses
- 14 Praying for others

Jesus' ministry was marked with the compassion, love and care for the 'unfortunate' of this world; and we His followers are called to follow suit in their daily practice at home, work, school, etc. - "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36); "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12). (see also Matthew 25:35-40). God rewards mercy and punishes the merciless (Matthew 18: 23-35).