

Session 5: The Merciful

What We Found

The fifth beatitude is the ladder's hinge, turning from postures toward God to the neighbor, and it is the only beatitude where gift and reward are the same substance: the merciful obtain mercy (sharpened in Matthew 6:14-15 and the unforgiving servant of Matthew 18). We discovered that Hosea 6:6 ("I desire mercy, and not sacrifice") is a verse Jesus quotes twice in Matthew, both times defending mercy against rulekeeping, and we heard God name himself merciful at Sinai (Exodus 34:6). Matthew 25 gives mercy its final-exam list and its secret: the least of these carry Christ's face. Our sealed guesses from Session 1 met the ladder tonight; forgiveness releases the debt, and it never means staying in danger.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM · HOMILIES ON MATTHEW

St. John Chrysostom, the fourth century's great preacher of almsgiving, teaches in substance that the almsgiver benefits more than the receiver, that care for the poor is care for Christ, and that God has arranged matters so that the wealth we release becomes our treasury while the wealth we hoard becomes our accuser.

Application (ours, not the saint's): Chrysostom would ask our generation one question: what surplus has God entrusted to you, and where is it going?

ST. FAUSTINA KOWALSKA · DIARY OF ST. FAUSTINA

St. Faustina Kowalska, the Polish religious sister whose Diary carried the Divine Mercy message to the modern Church, testifies throughout that work to mercy as the greatest of God's attributes, and records the Lord asking of souls three degrees of mercy toward neighbor: the merciful deed, the merciful word, and, where those are impossible, merciful prayer. (Her Diary is private revelation: an approved devotion carrying ecclesiastical approbation, binding no one (CCC 67); its theology of mercy, however, is the Gospel's own.)

Deed, word, prayer: nobody in this room is exempt from all three.

ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA · HER LIFE AND LETTERS

St. Teresa of Calcutta spent five decades doing Matthew 25 with her hands: the dying lifted from Calcutta's gutters, the abandoned held until the end. Her letters, published in *Come Be My Light*, reveal that for much of that time she worked in interior darkness, without felt consolation, which makes the witness stronger, not weaker: her mercy did not run on feelings.

She teaches, in substance, that we serve Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor: Matthew 25:40 taken with complete literalness.

Live It This Week

- Memorize Matthew 5:7; recite 5:3-7 each morning.
- Do one corporal work of mercy this week, in person if possible, and look the person in the eye.

- Begin forgiving one debt: name the person and the wound to God, and ask for the grace to release it (release is not reunion; see tonight's steelman).
- Read Matthew 5:8 before Session 6: the promise the whole ascent aims at.

Memory Verse · Matthew 5:7

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Catechism References

CCC 1829, 2447, 2842; on God's mercy, 210-211

If you handed your slip back in, the leader keeps it for one last look in Session 8.

Before Next Session

Read Matthew 5:8 before Session 6: the promise the whole ascent aims at.