

## THE ATTITUDE OF LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN A BROKEN WORLD # 5 Izwe Nkosi

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matt 5v7*

Izwe reminded us that the Beatitudes are an aid to a process of change - we're to become more like God. They each point to Jesus and what he has done. The Way of Wisdom teaching emphasised how we are responsible for what we do, the Beatitudes prophetically show us what God is like and he acts.

God is a God of mercy - 1Pet 1v3 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

JUSTICE is getting what we deserve, based on what we've done (*The wages of sin is death Rom 6v23*). But MERCY is how God sees us - compassion and love that is undeserved. Jesus shows us that God gave up his right to dismiss us - God chooses us! He shows us compassion we don't deserve.

*He does not treat us as our sins deserve Ps103v10. "I fear God never showed mercy to one so vile as I" David Brainerd. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5v8. He doesn't wait for us to deserve his love.*

Why? Jesus points us to God and shows us how to embody his character. Jesus' command: *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6v36*. As we gain mercy, so we are to show it. Naturally, we're vindictive (Think of poor driving attitudes). We need the character of God as we seek to show mercy to others.

Recall the Lord's prayer: *forgive us our sin, as we also have forgiven those who sin against us. Matt 6v12*. It is the language of love, compassion, forgiveness. Mercy creates vulnerability - it gives God room to heal. Blessed are those who are channels of healing and forgiveness. But God is not limited by our unforgiveness.

Forgiveness is a principle of God. Unforgiveness keeps us bound. Forgiveness frees us. Although sometimes forgiveness is a process that takes time and sometimes we need help to do this. It can be complicated.

Izwe shared his own story of growing up in S Africa and having a harsh Dad who affected him physically, mentally and emotionally. Beatings were frequent and his Mum turned to alcohol. Older sisters fled the home. Izwe was resentful but became a Christian aged 12 - "Mercy met me." His life changed and he came to UK. Years later he was told that Dad was dying so he returned home and the Holy Spirit whispered "Pray for him." Izwe hated, resented his Dad but, terrified, he offered to pray with him and led him to Jesus just 2 weeks before he died.

God asked Izwe to show mercy, to let go of his feelings and pain - and mercy broke into the situation.

"God's mercy to us is the motivation for showing mercy to others. Remember, you will never be asked to forgive someone else more than God has forgiven you." Rick Warren

- What examples from your own life can you share about experiencing God's mercy?
- How can we show mercy to others?
- Where are our "blind spots" for showing forgiveness to others?
- Thinking about Matt 6v12: Is God's forgiveness toward us conditional on us forgiving others?

*NB Pete Greig helpfully developed the theme of forgiveness - if crime has been committed, we can forgive, but the due process of the law should ensue. We don't have to return to a situation where we are vulnerable or unsafe. Sometimes we need only to forgive in our heart.*