

Waiting for the Rat to Die

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” – Matthew 5:7

It’s been said, “To not forgive is like drinking rat poison and waiting for the rat to die.” If there is one thing we all could use more of these days, it’s forgiveness and mercy.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

In Jesus’ time, Roman culture did not value the virtue of mercy. A Roman philosopher said that mercy was the disease of the soul. The Romans glorified justice, courage, discipline, and power.

You may remember the scene from the movie *Gladiator* where the Roman soldiers greeted one another with the phrase, “Strength and honor.” That is what the Romans valued: strength, force, and their own definition of honor. When a child was born into the Roman world, the father had the right of *Patria Potestas*. If he wanted the newborn to live, he held his thumb up. If he wanted the child to die, he held his thumb down, and the child was immediately drowned. Mercy was laughed at, mocked, and derided in that culture.

Our culture today does not really value mercy either. More often, we cry out for justice and, better yet, revenge. But God values mercy. What exactly is mercy? In Matthew 6:3, the word for mercy is used in the context of almsgiving. It means to help a person in need, to rescue the miserable. Mercy means, “A sense of pity, plus a desire to relieve that suffering.” It is not enough to simply say, “I feel your pain.” Mercy is meeting the need, not just feeling it. Real mercy is pity plus action! Anything you do that is of benefit to someone in need is considered mercy.

Again, Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. The more righteous a man is, the more merciful he will be. The more sinful a man is, the harsher and more critical he will be. If I know anything of God’s forgiveness in my life, I will be forgiving. If I am not merciful, then one must question

if I know anything of the mercy of God myself. Thomas Adams said, “He who demands mercy and shows none ruins the bridge over which he himself is to pass.”

Let’s try to show mercy to someone today.

Donald