

Primary Text: Matthew 5:7

We pay attention to that which we love, and if we love others with the love of God, we will see them not only as being of value because they are made in His image, but as worthy of love because of the person who is there, even if effaced by many sins and distortions of personality. The merciful pay attention to whoever is before them without judging them because of their social status or appearance. James has strong words for those who give preference for the rich, while diminishing the poor. And Jesus, speaking of the various judgments people made of him, said that man judges according to appearance, but God judges according to the heart. The merciful give attention to others without condemnation or blame for what they have done or what they do.

Being merciful isn't contingent upon anything. We cannot say, 'you did this to yourself; you live in poverty because you are lazy; or, you are sick because you do not eat healthy foods; The merciful do not make those kinds of judgments; those are for God alone to make. Our job is to be merciful to all, and thereby obtain mercy.

The church is a community that exists because something has happened that makes the entire process of self-justification irrelevant. God's truth and mercy have appeared in concrete form in Jesus and, in his death and resurrection, have worked the transformation that only God can perform, told us what God can only tell us: that he has already dealt with the dreaded consequences of our failure, so that we need not labor anxiously to save ourselves and put ourselves right with God. The church's rationale is to be a community that demonstrates this decisive transformation as really experientiable."