**HOLY SAVIOUR, BITTERNE BIBLE STUDY – WEEK BEGINNING JUNE 7th (Beatitudes 5)**

*We are continuing our series of studies on the Beatitudes which is the theme homegroup leaders settled on for this term. The Beatitudes teach us about Christian character, something which the current crisis may well be helping to shape!* ***Jot down your thoughts about the questions in the spaces provided*** *–* ***and it would be really good to share them with others.*** *Phone, Skype, email some members of your homegroup or a friend and/or email me your thoughts (* brianparfitt@btinternet.com *).* ***Brian Parfitt***

Who are the people who have helped you when you have been in any sort of trouble? How would you describe their character?

**The Beatitude we are thinking about this week is one which describes people who would be good to have around when we are in trouble. It speaks of people who are forgiving and giving. ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy,’ is a typical translation of this Beatitude. We have a God from whom we receive mercy and we are called upon to reflect that character in our dealings with others. There are two main aspects to being merciful. One is to show mercy and forgiveness to those who have wronged us. The other is in giving encouragement and providing practical support to those who need it - which traditionally have been labelled as ‘acts of mercy’.**

**To explore what this Beatitude means we are going to look at some passages from the Old and New Testament. *(If it’s helpful you might look at them over a few days, one at a time, rather than all at once.)***

Before ’lockdown’ we were exploring the character of God as seen in **Exodus 34.6-7.** Look at those verses. What do they tell us about a merciful God? In what ways have you experienced this mercy in your life?

When Jesus teaches about prayer he links God’s forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others (see Matthew 6.12 & 14-15).  **Read Matthew 18.21-35** where Jesus answers Peter’s question about how often he should forgive. What does the parable suggest about the scope of God’s forgiveness of us? How much do you appreciate how God has forgiven you -are you perhaps tempted to take it for granted? How can knowing that God is willing to forgive all our sins encourage us to forgive others?

**Read Luke 6.27-38.**What are we taught here about how to respond to those who hurt us? What positive responses should we make? How are we called to be generous? How are we to reflect God’s character? How will we be rewarded? How have you found forgiving and giving to be positive things?

In Romans 12 Paul describes mercy in forgiving and showing sympathy for others and in giving help to them. **Read Romans 12.8-21.** Can you think of practical ways in which we can follow Paul’s encouragements in these verses?

Reflect on what you have discovered from ***each of the passages*** we have looked at. What have you discovered about what it might mean to be merciful people in the challenges we face at the moment? How have these passages spoken to you about receiving God’s mercy and how that can inspire us to be merciful to others?