

“The Model Citizen – The Measure of Forgiveness”

Matt 18:v21-35

Scripture Ref: Col 3:12-17

1. Last session we talked about the model that Jesus gave us when a brother or sister in the Lord sins against us – how we handle that situation.
 - a. We talked about going to them – then taking a few witnesses if needed, even elevating the situation to the congregation if there was still no resolution.
 - b. And we talked about how the intent of that entire process was not to “make them pay” or to embarrass the person – the intent was completely geared towards reconciliation – bringing the two people together.
 - c. See it is the heart of God that His people walk in unity: with humility, honesty, and love for one another.
 - d. And this last installment – the last part of the discourse – is designed to bring it all home – to tie the whole thing together
 - e. This last session is about – **FORGIVENESS.**
2. Let’s try something – think about a time when someone hurt you or wronged you. Something really bad – take a minute
 - a. Now think about your first emotion?
 - b. Was it *“oh my, I just want to love them...”* – for most of us, that was NOT the first thing we felt.
 - c. For most of us it was more like *“that dude – he is gonna pay – oh yes...”* or *“Girl, you gonna get whats coming...”*
 - d. Of course, that would be the human response!
3. But think about this – if we are going to walk in unity, humility, honesty, and love for one another, it is going to require something of us.
 - a. It is going to requires us to become a participant in the process
 - b. It is going to require us to step OUT and take an emotional risk.
 - c. It is going to require us to tap into that think inside of us – the Holy Spirit of God!
4. Look at what Peter asks...

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

5. Peter is essentially asking Jesus *“how many wrongs must I endure before I cut off my brother? At what point can I ditch the relationship?”*

- a. Cut off? Yes – see what typically happens is when one person hurts another, the offended party often simply withdraws from the relationship.
 - b. We think: *“I’m not gonna put up with that – I’ll just avoid them”*, and that’s it – the split, and from that point on there is division between those two people.
 - c. Extend that over the course of a persons life, a split here, a split there, and you can see that over time we end up with a list of people that we have withdrawn from.
 - d. And what happens? We become more and more isolated.
6. Now multiply that through-out a congregation – and over time you end up with a congregation that is full of fractures.
- a. Like the pebble that pops up and hits your windshield – I little crack develops, but every bump you hit makes is a little bigger, and one day the windshield shatters
 - b. It happens in churches – sometimes you’ll see one that splits and come apart at the seams
 - c. And people think it was one issue – speaking in tongues or baptism
 - d. But it was not the ONE event that caused it – what happened was that a pattern of un-forgiveness had developed, multiple fractures developed, then that event hit and BAM. Just like the windshield.
7. So – getting back to Peter – he asks Jesus *“Exactly how many times do I have to forgive this guy... seven?”*
- a. (you can detect a sense of pride – as the Pharisee’s tought 2-3 times)
 - b. In other words – what is the measure? When can I cut him off?

22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

8. Seventy times seven... that would be 490 times... who could keep track of that many “forgives?” What kind of “forgiveness measuring stick is that?” (*you better watch out, you’re on 487!*)
- a. That is the point – no one could keep track of that
 - b. What Jesus is talking about is a *lifestyle of forgiveness!*
9. Remember that model Jesus gave us when someone wrongs us – the model does not end when repentance occurs...
- a. A very important piece of that model is the response of the offended party!
 - b. In other words - For the relationship to be fully restored not only does the offending party need to confess and ask forgiveness,

- c. ...but the offended party must actually extend forgiveness! (*What a novel concept!*)**
- 10. I have found that it is one thing to accept an apology, and quite another to extend true forgiveness to that person.**
 - a. See for me to extend true forgiveness requires me to put myself out there and become vulnerable once again.**
 - b. It requires me to move beyond tolerating that person;**
 - c. It requires me to embrace them once again.**
 - d. It requires that I extend to that person something called “grace.”**
 - e. See, the grace of forgiveness is to care more about the person than what they have done.**
 - f. But HOW??? How can I forgive? How can I get my heart to that place??**
- 11. Jesus gave a parable to help Peter, and you and I, to understand what He is saying.**

The Debtor

23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

- 12. Here is a guy that has a debt – and it’s not an insignificant debt – 10,000 talents would amount to perhaps \$10M today.**
 - a. And the king was moving forward to initiate justice: The guy owed the debt, he could not pay, he was going to have to become a slave for the rest of his life.**
 - b. And interestingly, he tells the king “give me a little more time and I’ll pay up.” Right...!**
- 13. But the king – in a moment of compassion – forgives the debt. He knows the guy could never pay it, so he forgives it.**
 - a. You would think that would be a life-changing event for the guy –**
 - b. You would think that from that point forward he would have become a paragon of grace and forgiveness to everyone!**
 - c. But no...**

28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged

him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

14. So apparently this guy had taken some of the money that he received from the King, and lent it to others –

- a. So he goes to one of his debtors – who owed him a fraction of that he owed the king – and demands his money – NOW!
- b. And they guy asks the very same thing “give me some time, and I’ll pay...” but his answer is NO – off to debtors prison you go!
- c. But some of his buddies saw it and thought “I’ll bet the king would like to know about this...”

32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

15. So what do we take from this? Well here was a guy that wanted grace for himself, but was not willing to offer grace to others.

- a. Here was a guy that was forgiven much, but was not willing to forgive a little.
- b. Here was a guy that was delivered from prison, but he threw another into prison, and ended up putting himself back into prison in the process.

16. But wait a minute – this wasn’t real – it never happened – it was a parable – Jesus is trying to help us see something...

- a. He is trying to help us see OURSELVES

17. Who is the King? The King is God!

- a. Who is the servant that owed the huge debt? That would be US!
- b. What was the debt that was forgiven? That would be the wages of our sin – death, eternal separation from God
- c. A debt that we could not pay – a debt that God, in His compassion and love, forgave us when we came to Him and asked!

18. But here is the important part – through his unwillingness to forgive his brother, this man placed himself into prison.

- a. What does that tell us? That the world’s worst prison is the prison of an unforgiving heart!
- b. See if we refuse to forgive those who have hurt us, then we end up imprisoning ourselves in our own bitterness and resentment.

- i. This person sins against us – we cut them off.
 - ii. Then another – we cut them off.
 - c. ...and the cell keeps getting smaller and smaller as time goes on, because it is a pattern –
 - d. And the root is not a one time *“I am so mad at that person’...”*
 - e. The root is that the offended person has never experienced forgiveness; therefore they are not able to give forgiveness to others. (*you cant give away what you don’t have*)
19. What do I mean by experience forgiveness?
- a. The day that you came to God and said *“God, forgive me of my sin, wash me clean make me new”* – God did just that.
 - b. But if you walked away from that, and began to have a perspective of *“I am going to be good, and God will see and be pleased, and God will see what a good and righteous person I can be, and other people will too...”*
 - c. Then you are saying exactly what this servant said *“King, I’ll pay you back!”*
 - d. That is trying to approach God from a perspective of justice.
 - e. And so – you also approach others from that same perspective.
 - f. When they do something against you – your response is just like the servant : *“Sure I’ll accept your apology, but you gotta make it up to me.”*
 - g. And in doing so you put yourself into prison
20. Here is the “one thing.” You can’t pay God back! You can’t earn his love. You can’t make up for your sin!
- a. We could live a hundred lifetimes, and we could never repay the debt that God has forgiven us.
 - b. We must come to the place – that humble place – that we realize in our heart that God has forgiven us a debt we could never have paid – and we accept that forgiveness.
 - c. And we walk away from that moment not saying *“I’m gonna pay you back God”* – but *“I am going to take this great gift of grace that God has given me, and I am going to give to others”*
 - d. I am going to forgive when they don’t deserve it. I am going to forgive when they cant pay it back – by the power of your might and your Holy Spirit in me - I will forgive!
 - e. I am going to walk FREE!
21. So that is the measure of forgiveness... there ISNT ONE. Put away the measuring Rod – and live a life where we practice forgiveness!

Col 3:12-17

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

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