**Matthew Sermon XII**

**Loving Relationships in the Kingdom of Heaven**

**Review:**

Matthew 16:13-15 Who do you say I am?

Isn’t that the ultimate question for all of us? Who do you say Jesus is?

And is your life consistent with that confession?

Peter: You are the Messiah/The Christ—the Son of the living God.

The apostles are finally getting it… Or are they?

Do you get it? Do you get who Jesus is—the one about whom and for whom the entire Old Testament was written.

Matthew 16:21 From that time on… From that time on, Jesus and the apostles made their way to Jerusalem. The die was cast. The plot was running its course.

And the course was leading to death.

v. 22 Peter: Never, Lord!!! I do not give you permission for my Christianity to include suffering!

If you do not get that following Jesus involves suffering, they you do not get Jesus.

If you are following Jesus, you are going from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem—from the world to the cross, from the farthest point away from God to Jerusalem.

v. 24 If you are following me, then you are following me to a cross.

**Our Sermon today. Matthew 18 Loving Relationships in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Matthew 18:1-5 Greatness in the Kingdom of God.

v. 3 “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

In this story I have always assumed that Jesus is talking about having a child-like heart. (teachable, willing to be led, trusting, etc.)

A bit of that there?

This is not the main thrust of what Jesus is saying.

He is saying that we, like Jesus, must be willing to take a lowly position (v. 4).

Whoever humbles himself like (take the lowly position of) a child is the greatest.

It is more like him repeating blessed are the poor in spirit and blessed are the meek. Finding your importance in unimpressive things.

Like Jack, Kaily and Vince going to the funeral on Friday.

I got to share with Lorenzo on Friday about John 13:34-35—about the fact that this is real with our family here. I am Soooo blessed that it is real here in the BCOC.—that we are changing and becoming like little children.

The greatest is not the one who preaches with the most eloquence.

The greatest in the kingdom is not the charismatic leader.

The greatest in the kingdom is not the star athlete or the top executive who brings in the big bucks.

No, the greatest in the kingdom is the one who shuns attention, who downplays his or her accomplishments, who goes into humbling and even humiliating situations. The humble servant.

What about you? Are you willing to become like a little child—to take a lowly position before people, to become poor in spirit.

If so, then you will be an honored citizen in God’s kingdom.

I covered Matthew 18:6-9 in Mark.

Matthew 18:10-14 Bringing in the wandering sheep.

v. 10 Are “these little ones” children with guardian angels? I think they are us.

Jesus: “What do you think?” All of you know what a shepherd will do with one lost sheep, right?

Me: No, not exactly, Jesus, tell me!

Be willing to stop what you are doing and go out and bring in the wanderer. The “little ones” are not children. They are believers who have the lowly heart of children. They are Jesus’ humble followers.

Sharing our faith, studying with people and baptizing them is awesome. It is glamorous work. But bringing back the strays is even better.

By the way: I have a better plan. Let’s prevent the sheep from wandering away in the first place. Let’s do the follow-up studies, let’s make those calls to the weaker sheep.

Why? v. 14 Because Jesus does not will that anyone would perish.

Q: Who can you think of, right now who has wandered? What are you going to do?

Matthew 18:10-14 wandering sheep. Matthew 18:15-20 Sinning sheep.

Ezekiel 34:15-19 I will take care of my sheep. I will search for the lost, bring back the strays, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.

But how will Jesus do that? Through his child-like sheep—us, hopefully!

But, sometimes the sheep muddy the water and trample the grass.

Jesus’ advice for such times is Matthew 18:15-20.

v. 15 If a disciple sins. Let’s say WHEN a disciple sins.

What should you do?

That is none of my business. It is between them and God. I will pray about it. I will tell their leader about it. I will gossip about it (well… no one says that…)

Honestly, a lot of times we can let it go. Not every sin needs to be confronted. But if your conscience does not allow you to let it go, and if you have prayed about it, here is what you need to do.

v. 15 “go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.

Don’t you hate it when people say to you, “Hey, can I talk to you in private.”

Guess who else hates it—the one calling you aside.

What if your brother or sister gets prideful and does not listen?

If your brother or sister sins, about 20% of the time, talk to them.

If they do not listen right away, about 20% of the time, bring in two or three witnesses.

If they still do not listen, about 20% of the time, bring it before the church.

If they do not listen, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Interpretation: Shun them and cut them off from fellowship altogether.

Q: How did Jesus treat “pagans and tax collectors”?

If they are no longer acting as disciples, treat them as people who are no longer disciples. Love them, reach out to them, but understand that they are no longer to be treated as disciples, because they appear not to be.

v. 18 repeats Matthew 16:19 Church leaders have delegated authority here. They are not judging, but making wise judgment (Matthew 7:1-6)

v. 19-20 One of the most taken-out-of-context scriptures in the Bible!!!

God is fully behind this process, properly done.

Matthew 18:21-35 Again, this is about how we treat one another!!

v. 21-22 Peter: That is pretty intense. How quick should I be to bring someone before the church?

Q: How forgiving should I be? What is the limit? A: As forgiving as God is.

Q: How many times should I forgive? A: As many times as God forgave you.

Jesus: As many times as you can possibly imagine, and then some more.

Why? because this is what God is like.

Read v. 23-35

For context, a talent is an amount of gold—about 75 pounds. $2000/oz x 16 oz./lb x 75 lb = two million dollars. This is roughly my lifetime earnings.

So ten thousand talents means 20 billion dollars!!!

A denarius was a day’s wage, so 100 denarii is not exactly “peanuts.” In today’s terms it might be $10,000.

In this story the king is God.

In this story the man who owed $20 billion is you.

In this story, the one who owes you 100 denarii ($10,000) is your brother or your sister in Christ (or it could be a family member or a neighbor or a co-worker, but in the context (v. 35) it is about your brother or sister in the church.

This story is about how God’s forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others.

Q: What do we learn from this passage about God’s forgiveness?

v. 26 “Be patient with me! We were delusional. We thought we could pay God back. We thought we could earn our way to forgiveness.

More than we could ever pay.

The king had entrusted a lot to this guy—he had a lot to forgive. God entrusted a lot with us. What have you done with the life he so generously gave you?

v. 27 He took pity on us and outright forgave the debt. His forgiveness appeared to be unconditional. There were no strings attached.

It was more than the servant would have had the nerve to ask for.

But it is conditional on our forgiveness of others.

v. 28 But… Someone had sinned against him.

Fact: If you are in the church long enough, someone will sin against you. Someone will grievously sin against you.

v. 29 “Please be patient with me.” In this case, the other person could have paid him back.

Q: What is the worst thing, typically, that one of us might have to forgive?

Q: According to this parable, how much more does God have to forgive us that we have to forgive our fellow human? 20,000,000,000/10,000 (to be fairly exact it is 2,000,000/1)

Matthew 18:32-34 God is very angry at us for not forgiving our sister or brother.

Result: symbolically, we were sent to hell.

Illlustration: Imagine you handmade a gift for a friend. You put dozens of hours into making the gift. It represented your love for your friend. But, when you gave it to your friend, he or she laughed, threw it on the ground and stepped on it. How would you feel?

This is what it is like when we do not forgive our brother or sister.

Q: [You are the only person in the room right now] What is the hardest things for you to forgive?

Parental mistakes, betrayal by a friend, being ripped off by someone you trusted, being publicly insulted…. I have heard of a story of members here trusting another member financially and losing their shirt!

Matthew 18:35 This is serious business!!

Has God forgiven you much? God expects you to forgive generously as well.

Matthew 6:15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Colossians 3:13 Bear with one another and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. (fully, without hesitation, generously).

Conclusion: It is absolutely imperative that you forgive those who sin against you. It is the natural corollary to our having been forgiven of God. Arguably, this is the only unforgivable sin.

This study is about our relationships with one another.

1. Remember that the greatest in the Kingdom is the least—the one who willingly puts him or herself into subservient positions.

2. If we see people wandering, we need to stop whatever we are doing, and go out and bring back the lost sheep.

3. Even if they are not lost, if they are still around, but they are caught up in some sort of sin, we need to take a risk, talk to them personally about it and, hopefully, win them back to repentance.

4. No matter what, we need to have infinite forgiveness for one another.