**Matthew XII**

**The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant**

1. After being told that we must take up our cross daily and follow Jesus to the Jerusalem—to the cross—we needed some encouragement. We needed a reminder about who Jesus is. So… we went up onto the Mt. of Transfiguration where we met with God and were told Jesus is his Son—with him I am well-pleased.

Then we needed some practical reminders about how we are to love one another.

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

3. We are reminded to take the time and effort to bring in lost sheep, to bring back those who have strayed, and to help people to avoid straying in the first place.

4. 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.

Today: Matthew 18:21-35 The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

18:21-22 After Jesus tells the apostles how to treat one who sins, Peter puts two and two together. This requires a lot of mercy and forgiveness on my part. How far does this go? What is the limit to forgiveness? Surely there is a limit!

Jesus did say to love our enemies, but surely this only goes so far…

In typical Jewish/Parisaical fashion he wants a number—a rule limiting his level of forgiveness. My friend betrays me 4 times… 5 times… 7 times? (the number of perfection or completion)

Jesus: No! 77 times or seven times 70.

Peter is not dumb. He gets it. An infinite # of times! Forgive without limit.

As an intellectual thing, this is easy to grasp, but on an emotional level, this is astounding!!!!

Jesus explain!!!

Matthew 18:23-35

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.

I only have 9,999 talents to go!

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. 25 “Sold” metaphorically, is sent to hell. (v. 33) The wages of sin are death!

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

The flesh believes in works salvation. All world religions believe in works salvation.

More than we could ever pay.

Another point: 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?

1 Cor 4:2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

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 actually conditional, as we will see—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?

Sexual abuse by a family member. Abandonment by a parent. Betrayal by a trusted friend or colleague. Corruption that destroys a business you were running.

In the church. You might be ignored. You might be disrespected. You might be taken advantage of financially. You might even be lied about.

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)

The point: not that we were not sinned horribly against ($10,000 some of us were), but that our debt of sin to God is so great, and we have already been forgiven.

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.

Colossians 3:12-13 Bear with one another and forgive one another if (when!) any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. (fully, without hesitation, generously).

Matthew 6:14-15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

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.

Is there anyone whose sin you are still holding against them? What will you do about this?

To forgive is not necessarily to forget, but it is to let go of the anger, the bitterness, the holding back of one’s love.

What about if they do not apologize to you and admit their fault?

The Bible has something to say about that, and we will not cover that this morning, but Matt 18, Coll 3 and Matt 6 still hold. You must, in the end, forgive them. Your personal health and your salvation are at stake.

What if they have already died? It is too late to tell them you forgive them, but it is not too late to forgive them—to let it go.

Remember… 100 denarii vs 10,000 talents $10,000 vs $20 bil

Two take-home points:

1. We have been forgiven of massive sin against God. Our debt to him is great. It sent Jesus to the cross, and any thought of us paying him back is nonsense!!!

2. God, in his grace, is prepared to remove the entire debt without reservation.

3. Actually, there is one reservation. We MUST forgive the much lesser offenses against us.