**THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT – MATT. 18:21-35**

**THE PARABLES OF JESUS #14**

Today our parable is all about forgiveness. We will see the gravity and scope of God’s forgiveness for the lost sinner as well as a hypothetical scenario dealing with just the opposite. The lesson that we will learn here today is forgiving others through the lense of God’s forgiveness for us. We begin with:

1. **A question that prompts the parable – Matt. 18:21-22 -.** Here we find Peter asking Jesus about the extent by which we as Christians should forgive each other. Peter presents a number that he felt clearly surpassed what was taught within Judaism. The Jews taught that you should forgive a person 3 times. Here we find that Peter more than doubles that number. By doing so, Peter thought that the number 7 was the absolute limit to how often we should forgive another Christian. Jesus is about to blow that number out of the water.
2. **Seventy times seven – vs. 22 -.** Jesus responds to Peter by stating that even 7 times isn’t enough; in reality it’s seventy times seven. As the upcoming parable will show, Jesus is not saying that we limit forgiveness to 490 times; He will show that our forgiveness should be limitless. When it comes to forgiveness on our part, it is important to understand how forgiveness really works. In **Luke 17:3-4,** we see the process by which forgiveness is to occur – **Luke 17:3-4** -. While we are to forgive our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in a limitless manner, true and complete forgiveness cannot occur until one asks for forgiveness – “saying, I repent”. Most people think that forgiveness is a one way street; it isn’t. One party must humbly seek forgiveness while the offended party should grant forgiveness. The offended Christian should release all bitterness towards the offending Christian but complete forgiveness cannot come to fruition unless both sides do their part.
3. **The participants in the parable – vs. 23 -.** The king here represents God while the servants represent lost sinners. The king here calls his servants to him so as to settle any debts that are outstanding. These servants are believed to represent in the real world of that day, representatives of the king whose task it was to collect taxes. If the representative kept the taxes, he would certainly be in hot water with the king. This parable points out such a situation.
4. **An insurmountable debt is forgiven – vs. 24-27.** In these verses, we will see that the king will forgive a debt of 10,000 talents which is an insurmountable amount of money as far as the first century Jew was concerned. It will picture the gravity and scope of God’s forgiveness towards the one who seeks His forgiveness through salvation. We should always consider how great a sin debt that we owed God prior to salvation. Let’s assume that we commit 10 sins every hour that we are awake. That would give us about 150 sins a day. That would give us about 55,000 sins per year. Over the course of a 75 year lifetime, that would amount to over 4 million sins. Even if we could offset those sins with good works, we would never come close to overcoming that amount – vs. 24-27 -.
5. **The unmerciful servant – vs. 28-30 -.** In this scenario we see the same servant who was forgiven an insurmountable debt turning around and not only refusing to forgive a debt of “a hundred pence” (about 10 dollars) but also putting him in jail until he could pay. The unmerciful servant stands in stark contrast to God. We see that God shows compassion and can forgive all of our many iniquities. This servant had no compassion, refused to forgive very little and exacted payment some other way. Many people are this way in their own lives. We hold grudges, bitterness and a desire to see bad things happen to those who have wronged us when we don’t forgive.
6. **Christians should forgive in light of our forgiveness – vs. 31-35 -.** The moral of the parable is the necessity of forgiveness. Since God has forgiven us so much, we should be willing to forgive those who will do far less to us than we have done to God.The parable ends with the unmerciful servant being exposed to the king, chastised by the king and imprisoned by the king. These are the basics of this parable:

* **That our sins are great.**
* **That God freely forgives them.**
* **That the offences committed against us by our brethren are comparatively small.**
* **That we should therefore most freely forgive them.**
* **That if we do not, God will be justly angry with us, and punish us.**