

Parables 1 - The Unforgiving Slave

Matthew 18:23-35

²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”



Parables – small story with a large point.

Parable – “comparison” learning about something unknown by comparison with something known.

To understand this parable:

Know about exaggeration

To make a point or cause a feeling – fish so big it began to pull the boat under.

The parable of the unforgiving slave exaggerates the amount owed.

“10,000 talents” – “talents” largest measure – “10,000” largest number

Slave owed so much it could not be calculated on my calculator.

This small story happens in 3 Acts:

Act 1: slave owes an enormous amount. King – (who in verse 35 we learn to be God) will sell slave and his family to pay off at least some debt. Slave works for patience till he repays in full. King forgives. Big point - God is hugely generous.

How often have you needed and counted on God’s forgiveness?

Tony Campolo tells story – little boy helped sister. After her death, he became a hellion in trouble nearly every day of school. First day of school teacher called him forward held his records in her hand says “you’re had”. Tore up – I don’t believe it.

Act 2: Forgiven slave leaves after the acquittal of all possible acquittals. Sees a fellow slave who owes a few bucks, grabs him by throat, has him thrown into prison till debt is paid. We are utterly dependent on God for debts we cannot pay and receive God's forgiveness, but can require justice from those who owe us.

Report that thoughts of revenge trigger pleasure, enters into our brain. Our brains may be hardwired for vengeance, but Jesus calls us to forgive.

70x7 Jesus taught to be the number to forgive others. And Jesus practiced his sermons on forgiveness from the cross; *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*

Reasons we resist forgiving: desire for revenge, invert Golden Rule – do to others as they've done to you. Expect perpetrator to mend the heart or repay us to our injury. Expect repentance and reform from perpetrator: pride, embarrassment, and deep wound (broken trust – vulnerability).

Forgiveness is to release person; not to deny injury; the debt is known and acknowledged in the parable; to forgive is not necessarily to forget.

There are consequences to unforgiveness – holding a grudge against another person is like taking poison and thinking the other person will die.

Kushner story – bitter and resentful single, divorced mom forgive because he doesn't deserve the power to live in your head and turn you into a bitter angry woman.

Some say forgive because it helps you. Others forgive because God expects it. We participate in the nature of God when we forgive as God forgives.

Perhaps unforgiving slave relied on human strength to forgive. We need God's help to let go. Forgiveness cannot be forced, but we can stop building our wall; nursing wound.

We can act to begin to tear down the wall. Two chair exercise, you play both parts; wounded and wound-er. What do you discover? See them more fully the one who hurt you. In the end, forgiveness is an act of love or comparison.

One way is to realize how God has loved us and has been compassionate to us.

Act 3: verse 35, Jesus told story to inspire us to forgive. This drama of forgiving is incomplete because we have unforgiven events and persons in our lives. Ask you to commit yourself to be a forgiving person and moved toward forgiveness:

Practice (self): dumb drivers
 Slow checkers
 Pray to God regarding big wounds
 Ask for God's help
 Why hurt so much?
 What did you lose?

What lost by unforgiveness?
What gained by letting go?

And then in time, as we become more and more forgiving, we can move to the bigger issues in our lives:

How have we been wounded?
How were we hurt in the event?
Why did it hurt as much as it did?
Did we have some part that we played in the hurt?
What is the cost of unforgiveness?
What is lost in not forgiving?
Committing to being a forgiving person, and
Asking for God's help in forgiving.
Praying for the other.

Jesus calls us to forgive? Are you up to it? I think you are...with God's help.

Rev. Dr. Steve Wilson
Oakmont Presbyterian Church
415 Pennsylvania Avenue
Oakmont, PA 15139

412.828.5770
swilson@oakmontpresby.org