

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Opening: Father’s Day became a national holiday in 1972 ...

Text: [Matthew 18: 21-35](#)

Continuing Parables of Jesus This one has a subheading in most bibles: *The Unforgiving Servant*

If you’ve read the Bible at all you’re familiar with this story

But most of us miss an important detail ... this parable was told to only one disciple – Peter.

Jesus gives a long answer to a short question asked by Peter

1. Peter’s question gives a clear look at his heart (and ours- because we would have asked the same question.
2. The answer Jesus gives Peter, reveals God’s heart
3. This parable is one of those ... **“oh boy!”** moments

Peter is the only disciple brave enough to ask Jesus the question: How many times should I forgive someone who has wronged me?

Then in typical Peter fashion, he answers his own question. ***Is seven enough?***

Jesus’ answer is the parable – that begins with, *The Kingdom of Heaven is like*

[Matt 17: 21-35](#) NIV

²¹ Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?”

²² “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!”

²³ “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. ²⁴ In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. ²⁵ He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

²⁶ “But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ ²⁷ Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

²⁸ “But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

²⁹ “His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. ³⁰ But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

³¹ “When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. ³² Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me.

³³ Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.


³⁵ “That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.”

I find Jesus’ answer is a bit disturbing!

Parable Characters and elements: Remember a parable takes something we don’t understand into a story about we do understand to build a bridge of comparison

1. King –
2. servants –
3. unpaid debts in huge amounts –
4. mercy –
5. forgiveness and finally judgment

You might be thinking, the first servant is a miserable, merciless rat who got what he deserved but what’s that got to do with me?

 Anyone ever experience severe turbulence when flying? Jen and I did - pilot’s warning announcement was cut short and the plane dropped so suddenly and quickly that only our seat belts kept us off the ceiling – our butts were suspended in mid air – wasn’t even time to say a prayer before it was over

I’ve heard people use this expression: *Death is just another part of life*

Oh really?

Pastor Ben Stuart, a youth leader in Passion City Church in Atlanta shared this story:

They in flight when the Plane’s engine suddenly cut out and went into a nose dive –

Immediately - half the plane cried out to Jesus to save them - the other half screamed the “F word”. No other profanities just the “F” word

When the engine suddenly kicked back and the plane leveled out ... the people looked at each other – They discovered something *existential* about each other in that moment. When death comes knocking there is no medium ground! You’re going to get philosophical – at that moment death is not just part of living – You’re going one way or the other!

Some of the people talked to each other ... oh so you’re an “F word” guy huh?

Death eventually comes for every person immediately followed by eternity and judgment (depending on your personal decisions it can be great or horrible)

The statistics on death never change – one out of one people die. *George Bernard Shaw*

An Old Legend tells of a merchant in Baghdad who sent his servant to the market. The servant quickly returned white and trembling. He said to his master, “I was down at the market place when I was bumped from behind by someone, when I turned to look it was Death staring at me. Master please lend me your horse I’ll ride to Samarra to hide, Death will not find me there.”

The merchant lent the servant his horse, and he galloped away in great haste. Later that day the merchant went down to the market place and also saw Death standing in the crowd. He went over and asked, “Why did you threaten my servant today?”

“I didn’t threaten him,” said Death “I was just surprised to see him in here in Baghdad because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.”

Remember ... Jesus told the parable of *the unforgiving servant* to Peter not to the crowd

He doesn’t begin the parable with judgment that was the consequence.

Jesus’ Focus is mercy and forgiveness

Matthew 6: *NIV* The Lord’s Prayer, *a prayer that was designed to be used daily*

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹⁴ ... if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Mathew 7 NIV

¹“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Do you get the emphasis by Jesus on this subject?!!!

Reconstruction

At the End of the Civil War Abraham Lincoln – was asked how he was going to treat the rebellious southerners who would be forced to re-join the United States. The questioner expected Lincoln to take vengeance, but he answered: *“I’ll treat them as if they had never been away.”*

Matthew 7: 12 NIV

¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Anyone know what that saying is called? The Golden Rule

People have an inborn knowledge of right and wrong. We know what we should and shouldn’t do but somehow it gets messed up!

The Yale Infant Cognition Center published the results of a recent study on child morality

- A rough form of morality exists in babies as young as 3 months old
- Used puppets for morality plays
- One puppet demonstrated good and kind and sharing characteristics
- The other puppet was bad, stealing things and mean
- When they offered the **good puppet** to the children they smiled, laughed, reached for hugged and kissed it
- When they offered the **bad puppet**, the babies would cry, try to hit it... they knew it deserved to be judged!

If we know the difference between right and wrong ... why do we choose what’s wrong?

What if Mercy and judgment are opposite sides of the same coin?

God’s laws were never meant to be practiced religiously! – they hold life inside of them – they are alive

But life is only released when we let the Holy Spirit enter our hearts.

[Louis Zamperini](#), was a World War II hero survived more than two and a half years of brutal punishment in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps. He returned home to the US to his wife and family a free man but he was consumed by hate for a Japanese officer known as the Bird.

His desire for revenge destroyed him - until at a Billy Graham revival meeting – Jesus found and rescued him – he became free because he was able to forgive his enemies!

A forgiving spirit is a spirit of humility –

It's what Jesus' life personified in scripture

When we forgive someone who has wronged us –

- We're the one that is healed - mended
- we're set free and it doesn't matter whether the other person asks or even wants your forgiveness –
- We are free because only God's Spirit can give you the power to truly forgive

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty!

The ability to forgive is the difference between passion from pettiness

Lovable Daily Bread 6/15/18

Do you understand that's the way your Heavenly Father feels about you?

In Romans Paul asks the question: What can separate us from the love of God?

Nothing -The only thing that can keep His love from penetrating and saturating us is a hard unforgiving heart ... our own unforgiving hearts.

If you've never invited Jesus to enter your heart – this is your moment

If you've been harboring anger in your heart for a long time today is the day to be free of it!