

# JESUS THE STORYTELLER

The Unmerciful Servant

NOVEMBER 11, 2018 /NOVEMBER 14, 2018

## TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Matthew 18:21-35**

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants."<sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold[b] was brought to him.<sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.<sup>26</sup> "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'<sup>27</sup> The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.<sup>28</sup> "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.<sup>29</sup> "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'<sup>30</sup> "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.<sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.<sup>32</sup> "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.'<sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'<sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.<sup>35</sup> "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

## FIRST THOUGHTS

*"We reveal the true condition of our hearts by the way we treat others. When our hearts are humble and repentant, we will gladly forgive our brothers. But where there is pride and a desire for revenge, there can be no true repentance, and this means God cannot forgive."* Warren W Wiersbe

Debt is a reality to many people today. Can you put these 5 countries in order (highest to lowest) as to who has the most personal household debt in the world? United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Malaysia, and South Korea

Are you surprised by any of this list? Why is debt such a struggle in our country? How would you feel if the people/institutions you owed debt to called you to cancel your debt? What would you do to celebrate?

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Matthew includes Jesus' teaching on personal forgiveness directly after His teaching on how a group of disciples (our understanding of church) should handle a sinning disciple. Some see a tension between 18:15-20, where Jesus indicates there is a point when a disciple should be cut off, and 18:21-35, where Jesus teaches that forgiveness should be given freely and endlessly. Is Jesus contradicting Himself? When we realize Jesus is addressing two different issues, we understand there is no tension. Verses 15-20 deal with pastoral concern and how to keep a disciple from falling away due to sin. Our passage, in verses 21-35, addresses how a believer should forfeit his or her right to obtain justice for an offense made by a brother or sister in Christ.

Rabbinic Judaism taught that forgiving someone three times was sufficient to demonstrate a forgiving spirit, based on Old Testament accounts of God's action toward humanity (see Job 33:29-30; Amos 1:3; 2:6). But the thought prevalent in first-century Judaism was that if a person sins willfully, expecting to receive forgiveness, then no such forgiveness should be offered.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### > Read Matthew 18:21-22

- How would you define forgiveness?
- What makes forgiveness difficult to give to someone?
- What potential objections would someone have to forgiving another person "seventy times seven"?
- What would such a level of grace and forgiveness within the church communicate to unbelievers?

**> Read Matthew 18:23-27**

- ° When have you experienced a dire or stressful financial situation?
- ° What emotions did you feel through that experience?
- ° How would you compare being forgiven of your sin debt before God with being forgiven of a large financial debt?
- ° What effect has God's compassion and forgiveness through Jesus Christ had upon you?

**> Read Matthew 18:28-35**

- ° What are some ways, even subtle ones, that we can punish others instead of forgiving them for wrongs they have done against us?
- ° How can we resist the desire for revenge and instead practice mercy as it has been shown to us in Christ?
- ° How are you challenged by Jesus' addition of the phrase "from your heart" to His command to forgive?
- ° What practical steps do you need to take in light of Jesus' teaching in the parable of the unmerciful servant?

**SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE**

"It is the essence of Christian discipleship not just to love your neighbor in the way you would like to be treated, but also in the way you have been treated by God." David Wenham

We are a people who have sinned greatly against God our Creator. Our debt is so massive that, like the first slave, we could never repay our King. In a gracious act, however, God sent Jesus, and by faith in Him, God cancels our debt and forgives our rebellion. Through Jesus' death on the cross for our sin, in our place, we have received an incomprehensible forgiveness. We do not see our sin as seriously as God does. God does not grade sin on a curve – our sin is unforgivable, unatoneable, and unfixable without what a just and loving God has done in Christ for us.

**UPCOMING LESSONS**

11/18/18	Jesus the Storyteller Week 3: The Good Samaritan
11/25/18	No LifeGroups
12/02/18	Jesus the Storyteller Week 4: The Father of Two Lost Sons
12/09/18	Jesus the Storyteller Week 5: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector
12/16/18	Jesus the Storyteller Week 6: The Wicked Tenants

**READ THROUGH THE BIBLE**

**12th** - Job 37-38; 1 Corinthians 12 | **13th** - Job 39-40; 1 Corinthians 13-14 | **14th** - Psalm 149; 1 Corinthians 15-16 | **15th** - Job 41-42; 2 Corinthians 1-2 | **16th** - 2 Corinthians 3-6 | **17th** - 2 Corinthians 7-10 | **18th** - Psalm 124; 2 Corinthians 11-13