**Intro: Continuing parables series – Open Bibles to Matthew 18**

This morning… our parable is about FORGIVENESS… the “F” word that… while it’s not a swear word… almost ALWAYS involves painful/hard/awkward situation when we use it. Everyone needs to know about this… because EVERYONE has had to forgive someone else… or be forgiven by someone else… We are sinful human beings… which means by default… we all sin against others… which can and often does… lead to broken relationships/marriages/families/churches/communities… What are we to do with this problem? Our grudges… our “people” that we don’t like to speak about… we all ***have*** them or ***have had*** them… or maybe ***you’ll meet*** yours soon. Jesus… AGAIN in stunning fashion cuts to the heart to show us what forgiveness is. Before we read his parable let me give you a pop quiz: **True or False. Everyone deserves to be forgiven**

**True or False. Where deep wounds between people are concerned, forgiveness and healing can happen in a moment.**

**True or False. A willingness to forgive is a test of whether or not a person will go to heaven when he or she dies.**

Let’s read his wonderful Parable: **Read Matthew 18:21-35 and PRAY Just a disclaimer: Lot of Info – Listen – watch/Print later**

**Read Matthew 18:21-35 (Pray) Answer 3 questions: What is BF? What if I don’t F? What if they don’t want to be F?**

**What is Biblical forgiveness?**

* **Forgiveness is always offered (v. 21-22)**

70x7 🡪 Unlimited - Luke 17:3-4 🡪 If they come to you 7 times the same day… offer it. Yeah but what if… we’ll get there.

* **Forgiveness involves cancelling a debt (v. 27)**

Someone absorbs the cost… the forgiver (usually) or the forgiven

Million dollar debt – King 🡪 100 Denarii (few thousand dollars) –**though the man’s debt was less… its was still a signif. loss**

* **Forgiveness is a gift from God (COSTLY - Paid by atoning sacrifice of JC)… that we extend to others (How Not?)**

**No one DESERVES to be forgiven (False)…** Kingdom isn’t about fairness… it’s a gift from God!

**So… we don’t forgive others because they deserve it… We forgive because we have been forgiven (Eph. 4:32)**

**Matt Boyers (in team teaching) 🡪 The gospel will not stop in my heart. Forgiveness does not end with us!**

**You see that in this story… the wicked servant… clearly misunderstands… tramples on the forgiveness of the King and goes right out… unchanged… ungrateful… for the MASSIVE debt he was forgiven. Do you know that you’ve been forgiven a massive debt??? UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN SINFULNESS!**

- It’s not just what you did… it’s who you did it against (lie to you, wife, police, customs, supreme court)…

Word, Thought, Deed 🡪 The rap sheet is ENORMOUS… Friend…

Quite frankly… if You aren’t willing to forgive… perhaps you need to know the Gospel better…

* **Forgiveness is an event and a process**

***True or False. Where deep wounds between people are concerned, forgiveness can be unpacked in a moment.***

Forgiveness requires a *change of heart*… and a *continual growth*… the man in the story was not changed… and showed no evidence of softening in his heart towards his brother.

***How does God forgive us?*** - Hebrews 8:12 “Remember their sins no more”

**🡪 This is hard work… Putting to death one’s own self-righteousness (I deserve to be mad – they don’t deserve it!), fueled by the receiving of gracious forgiveness by God (I didn’t deserve to be forgiven)… and extending the same attitude to others around you (therefore I will freely forgive).**

- Ken Sande summarizes it this way:

 - I will not dwell on this incident

 - I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you

 - I will not talk to others about this incident

 - I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship

**Summary** 🡪 Biblical Forgiveness 🡪 It’s a heart that always offers forgiveness… a heart that is willing to cancel a debt b/c we have already had our MASSIVE (insurmountable) DEBT PAID by JC… It’s not just a one-time word… but the actions to BACK IT UP! It’s an act of faith that works itself out every day in our relationships. Quite honestly… Impossible w/o God 🡪 SOOOOO

**What if I don’t forgive? (ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM)**

* **Failure to extend/receive forgiveness turns victims into victimizers (v. 29-30) (Timothy Lane) 🡪 Look back at the story**

- Man should have celebrated his huge debt being cancelled… instead… not receiving forgiveness in gratitude he is unchanged… he goes out in fury and pours out his anger/judgment

- This is really prevalent in our relationships… the saying: **Hurt people… hurt people**. Unforgiveness (extending/receiving) causes bitterness to rise up in you which fuels your anger towards others… Some of the people who have the most destructive tendencies… have been hurt themselves.

🡪 Especially in the family context (where the most unforgiveness lies). Sadly, it seems to be those closest to us that bear the biggest punishment… “I’ll never be like my mom… then you end up becoming her…”

**Tim Keller says: “Bitterness is the poison you drink hoping someone else will drop dead.”**

**Data - proven scientifically that holding grudges causes physical diseases**

**“There is an enormous physical burden to being hurt and disappointed,” says Karen Swartz, M.D., director of the Mood Disorders Adult Consultation Clinic at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Chronic anger puts you into a fight-or-flight mode, which results in numerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure and immune response. Those changes, then, increase the risk of depression, heart disease and diabetes, among other conditions. Forgiveness, however, calms stress levels, leading to improved health.”**

* **Failure to forgive damages the our Christian witness (v. 31-34)**

- What makes you different? Quick to anger? Harbor Bitterness/Gossip towards boss? Speak ill of your EX? Unwilling to talk to that friend? Unfriend someone on FACEBOOK? Unfollow? **Rom. 2 “Name of God blasphemed b/c of you”**

* **Failure to forgive has eternal consequences (v. 35)**

***True or False. A willingness to forgive is a test of whether or not a person will go to heaven when he or she dies.***

- This is not the first time Jesus said this… said it in Lord’s prayer… clear to our Lord… **FORGIVEN PEOPLE FORGIVE**

**I deserve forgiveness…. THEY DON’T**

Is it possible to be a “Christian” and hold grudges? **Illustration: Girl who wouldn't forgive her older brother.**

**What if they don’t want to be forgiven?**

**In this story… the King symbolizes God (which we are NOT)… and the sinful servant is tortured… what should we do?**

* **Resolve not to take revenge (Romans 12:19-21)**
* **Proactively offer love 🡪 Illustration ELIZABETH ELLIOT (Not going to them trying to get them to say sorry)**
* **Leave room for the wrath of God**
* **Always be open to forgiveness… desire to forgive**

Example of Jesus: forgive them they don't know what they're doing. (Battle is not against flesh and blood)

**Side-bar 🡪 REALLY INSIGHTFUL FOR PARENTING**

***Apologizing is not the same as asking for forgiveness. (illustration – Spilling coffee vs. throwing it in your face) You must first name the specific sin, and then explicitly ask the person for forgiveness: ‘I was wrong to yell, at you. Will you forgive me?’ Apologizing minimizes sin…***

**I just can’t do it… what should I do? See Psalm 73:16-17, 21-26**

Allow the Holy Spirit to change my attitude towards those I hold bitterness towards. God sets our emotions right

Hebrews 12:14-15 - watch out for the root of bitterness… it blocks God's grace \*Blocks the pipes

**Who do you need to forgive? Who have you sinned against? Who have you been thinking of this whole message?**

**🡪 Spend a moment before God and ask HIM to change your heart.**

**Conclusion:** Lead into Communion 🡪 Instructions (Take during songs as you feel led)