

“Seventy times Seven: Unlimited Forgiveness”

1. Those in the Kingdom of God must always _____ humbly seeking reconciliation.

Mark 11:25-26 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” [Some manuscripts add verse 26: But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.]

Luke 17:3-4 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

Matt. 6:12, 14-15 ...and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

2. Two Motives for Forgiving others:

A. I understand that rather than receiving the Justice I deserve, God has treated me with great M_____.

I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’

B. When I dare to ask for Mercy for myself yet R_____ to forgive others I pay a great price - .

³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Suggested Questions for Small Groups

1. What does Jesus require of Peter, and all of us, when someone comes to us asking for forgiveness? Why would Jesus want this in His Kingdom?
2. We should forgive seventy times seven times (limitlessly) because... ?
3. What was lacking in the heart and mind of the first servant, who just after being released by the King went out and choked someone who was indebted to himself? Why was this so absurdly wrong?
4. From your experience in reconciling broken relationships, how do you go to someone who has sinned against you (ref. Matt. 18:15ff, Eph. 4:32 and Gal. 6:1)?
5. How might you apply to your life this clear, yet radical, command to forgive others given to you by your Lord?

Next Sunday, March 7, 2010: **Great Parables of Jesus**
Travis Marsh speaking: Part 3 - “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”

GREAT PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

parable l’parəbəl | noun

a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels.

ORIGIN Middle English : from Old French *parabole*, from an ecclesiastical Latin sense ‘discourse, allegory’ of Latin *parabola* ‘comparison,’ from Greek *parabolē*.

FEB. 28 - THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

Peter came up: Peter is often the one person among the disciples who voices concerns and questions to Jesus. Here he uses the respectful address of “Lord” and then asks his question.

Matt. 18:21-35

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”

The source of his concern could be immediately in the context, he may be concerned with Jesus teaching about the priority of reconciliation with those who sin against you (18:15-17). Peter wants to know the new rules for forgiving others in the Kingdom of God.

Lord, how often... As many as seven times?: “By suggesting seven acts of forgiveness Peter thought he was quite generous, because the rabbis required only three” (Thomas and Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*). Note: Jewish Rabbi’s saw the three times of forgiveness in Amos 1. Peter is more than doubling the number of times he and other followers of Jesus would have to forgive those who sin against them. Peter has clearly

learned something about the Kingdom of God and can see that the path of retaliation or bitterness is not the path Jesus espouses. But he also sees the need for some limits in how often we must forgive.

seventy times seven: Jesus’ response to Peter’s generous proposal that he and others of the Kingdom of Heaven forgive up to seven times is to require that we forgive limitlessly. He explains this immoderate position in his following parable of the unmerciful or unforgiving servant. See parallel teachings on forgiveness by Jesus: Luke 17:3-4; Matt. 6:12, 14-15; Mark 11:25-26. Also see Eph. 4:31-32.

²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.”²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

the kingdom of heaven may be compared to: Jesus is telling Peter and us today what the kingdom of heaven He was bringing into the world could be likened to. He is educating His followers and changing many of their perceptions and expectations of what God’s Kingdom is about relationally. *a king:* Every listener understood the sovereign power that a king exercised. The king in Jesus’ parable has come to a time of financial reckoning with his subordinates - one in particular has had a great financial responsibility and has failed. *who owed him ten thousand talents:* Jesus chooses an enormous amount of debt for the king’s servant. A “talent” is a measure of weight and could have been silver or gold. At that time, a year of Roman taxes for the whole region of Judah was about 1000 talents of gold. Let’s just say... this man’s debt would be equivalent to a \$1 Billion debt today. *And since he could not pay:* The huge debt could not be repaid and so the King punishes the man and his family by selling them into slavery. *Have patience with me:* Jesus has this sentence spoken twice in the parable - out of the mouth of both servant debtors. The first time it’s the plea of the man with a huge debt that he would never be able to repay. He is on his knees before His King begging for more time. He has no recourse but to beg for mercy from the one person who can help him, the one to whom he is indebted. *out of pity for him...released him and forgave him the debt:* Amazingly the king has compassion on the repentant debtor and releases him and cancels the debt. This huge debt does not need to be paid off, it is cancelled. The debtor is not going into slavery with his family, but going to free life. Rather than receiving the Justice he deserves from the King, he is receiving Mercy which he does not deserve.

²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.’³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

who owed him a hundred denarii: This debt is miniscule by comparison to the first servant’s debt. If the first servant’s debt is equivalent to \$1 Billion, the second servant’s debt would be equivalent to 100 days at laborers wages. *seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’:* Here Jesus adds emotion and violence to his story. The one who had received mercy and been released from his huge debt is now absurdly insisting on justice from someone who owed him money. Jesus clearly presents someone who harshly does not feel pity or compassion on another person who has pleaded for patience in the exact same way he had once pleaded. What is missing from this man’s heart that he would act this way? *fellow servants saw... reported to their master:* Why were the fellow servants greatly distressed? Well that is the point of Jesus’ story. What they witness they saw as a “moral monstrosity” (Lenski) because he seems to be devoid of all humility, pity and mercy. *You wicked servant!:* The King labels the summoned servant wicked. What is so wicked about demanding justice from someone in your debt? *should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?:* The king’s anger is traced by Jesus to this man’s inappropriate response to being forgiven and released from his huge debt. It is inappropriate to be forgiven an great debt and not be changed at a heart level by the gratitude you feel toward the mercy-giver. *So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you:* There is nothing subtle with this statement as Jesus applies the lesson of the parable to his followers. Members of the Kingdom of Heaven must forgive as they have been forgiven. We must understand our debt and feel a great degree of gratitude toward the One who saves us. Without this gratitude, we will not have a heart that feels compassion of others and we will not forgive them. *forgive your brother from your heart:* The forgiveness of others cannot be maintained if it is merely a duty that must be performed - it must come from a melted and changed heart.