

SUNDAY

March 4, 2012

READ: Matthew 18:21-35

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: 1) When the Bible talks about “The kingdom of heaven,” it refers to the reign of God that he is bringing about through Jesus Christ...the establishment of God’s rule in the hearts and lives of his people and the creation of a new order of righteousness and peace.* 2) A “talent” (vs. 24) was worth 20 years of a day laborer’s wages. 3) A “denarius” (vs. 28) was the usual daily wage of a day laborer.

KEY CONCEPT: We are the recipients of God’s mercy in spite of our sin. He expects that we will forgive others as we have been forgiven.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Today, spend time thinking broadly about the topic of forgiveness, and how it relates to your life. In the days ahead we will be looking more specifically about this subject matter

PRAY: As you approach God in prayer today, let him know that you look forward to this week of examining forgiveness at a level that helps you understand his love for you and how we may extend that love outward to others. You may wish to ask him for specific ways that you can apply these teachings to your own life.

*Adapted from the Glo Bible

MONDAY

March 5, 2012

READ: Matthew 18: 21-35 (Focus: verses 21-22)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: Peter may be asking this question in light of what Jesus had said just previously (see vs. 15). What is the point of Peter’s question? Was Jesus being literal in his answer? If not, what did he mean by the number of times that he gave?

KEY CONCEPT: Jesus urges us to move past the letter of the law to embrace the spirit in which it was given to us. We are not to keep records of wrongs against others, and are to forgive unconditionally, as he does.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Do you keep a list in your mind and heart of those things you perceive others to have done against you? Is forgiving others something that comes easily, or is it difficult? What must someone do to be granted forgiveness by you? Do you think your process of forgiveness works well? Are there side effects of harboring hard feelings toward others? In light of today’s passage, do you think you need to reconsider this area of your life

PRAY: Forgiveness is near and dear to God’s heart...and yet it is something not easily done by many people. Take your thoughts from today’s devotion before God and ask him to help you process them in light of what His goal is for you. Allow him free reign to work a new understanding of forgiveness, if that is what He wants to do.

TUESDAY

March 6, 2012

READ: Matthew 18: 21-35 (Focus: verses 23-27)
For background on selling into slavery (vs. 25), see Ex. 21:2; Lev. 25:39; 2 Kings 4:1; Neh. 5:5; Isa. 50:1

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What was the penalty for being unable repay a debt? Was this a mandatory process, or at the discretion of the creditor? What was the amazing act of compassion in this section of the parable?

KEY CONCEPT: As our “holy creditor”, God has it in his power to grant or withhold forgiveness for our sin. In his mercy, he foregoes his right to exact retribution upon those who are repentant.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: When you take out a loan or carry a balance on your credit card, you are reminded on a timely basis of your debt obligations. What consequences do you risk if you don’t repay them?

Have you ever thought of sin like a broken law for which a penalty must be paid? Have you fallen on your knees before God, seeking his mercy for your own sin?

PRAY: Note that the servant in the parable was merely pleading for more time to repay...but the master totally cancelled his debt. How incredible is that? While we can try to make amends for our sinful action (and should do so), consider our God who takes that sin away from those who have a repentant heart. Pour your heart out to God today for his incredible mercy.

WEDNESDAY

March 7, 2012

READ: Matthew 18: 21-35 (Focus: verses 28-30)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: How does the debt owed to the servant (vs. 28) compare to what he had been forgiven by his master (vs. 24)? How was the servant’s response different than the master’s? Why do you think he responded in this way? Do you think the servant’s response was illegal in any way?

KEY CONCEPT: Our decisions and actions, while perfectly legal...and maybe even ethical, can contradict the spirit of God’s desire for healthy relationships.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Have you ever been forgiven of a large debt? Or perhaps been forgiven for a huge mistake that you have made that had bad consequences for someone else? If so, did being forgiven by others play into how you have lived your life since that time toward other people?

Have you withheld your forgiveness of something that was owed you...or for an action against you by another...and sensed that God still wants to resolve this matter? Have you resisted God’s leading on this?

PRAY: Living in harmony with others over time is something that requires God’s help, as people will eventually hurt one another in some way. Today ask God if there is any way in which he would have you bless someone through a forgiving act.

THURSDAY

March 8, 2012

READ: Matthew 18: 21-35 (Focus: verses 32-35)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What caused the master to change his mind? Was he right to expect that his own act of mercy should be reflected by the servant's act of mercy? Was the master within his right to change his mind about being merciful? Do you think the servant will ever be able to repay the master (see verse 24)?

KEY CONCEPT: God will show mercy to us to the degree that we are merciful to others.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Have you ever said something to someone that you didn't really mean? In verse 35, Jesus speaks about forgiveness "from your heart." How is this different than forgiveness "from your lips?" Have you ever forgiven someone from your lips without actually forgiving them in your heart? Do you think that God will notice? How can you forgive from the heart when you don't feel like doing so?

PRAY: 1 Samuel 16:7 says that God looks at the heart. Today, take those situations where you have not truly forgiven from your heart, and ask God to help you to do what you cannot do in your own strength.

FRIDAY

March 9, 2012

READ: Matthew 6:9-15 (Focus: verses 12, 14-15)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What are each of the key components of the Lord's prayer (i.e. giving glory to God's name, desire for his will to be accomplished, etc.)? Which part of the prayer does Jesus emphasize?

KEY CONCEPT: Jesus teaches us to ask to be forgiven only as we have offered forgiveness to others.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Why do you think that Jesus placed such heavy emphasis on forgiveness? What happens to relationships between people when there is an unforgiving spirit present? Have you experienced situations where unforgiveness has planted the seeds of bitterness - which has done serious and long-lasting damage to relationships? Are we able to forgive even before the offending party comes and asks to be forgiven? Ought we to do so?

PRAY: 1 Corinthians 13 is often read at weddings. Take a few moments today to read verses 4-6 of that chapter, and contemplate what place forgiveness plays in what love is. Pray these verses to God, asking for His help in making true love a growing and vital part of who you are becoming.

SATURDAY

March 10, 2012

READ: Ephesians 4:31-32; Romans 12:18

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: The Bible has many words of instruction...for how we should live, and also how we tend to our hearts. What are the specific instructions to us in these verses? What example is held up for us to understand the nature of forgiveness?

KEY CONCEPT: Life will go better when we have a heart of forgiveness and a desire to be at peace with others.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Consider what the words of verse 31 look like in real life: bitterness - wrath - anger - clamor - slander - malice. Have you experienced living in circumstances where these are commonplace? Have you been the perpetrator of many of these? How can they be overcome with what Paul writes about in the next verse: kindness - tenderheartedness - forgiveness? Do you have control over your own attitudes, and how you react to your circumstances? If not, do you think God would call us to do something that is not possible?

PRAY: If you find it difficult to live in a way that is outlined in today's verses, call upon God's help to move in that direction. God desires you to live in healthy relationships, based on love and forgiveness. Pray today's verses, asking for His help in making them your reality.

TEACHINGS THAT GOT HIM

KILLED

Personal Devotional Guide :: March 4 - 10, 2012
McLane Church :: Erie County, PA