

# Matthew Ch18v21-35

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Date: 03 March 2024

Preacher: Brian Vickers

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, for the rest of us, I'm going to ask Brian to come up.
- Brian Vickers has been with us a number of times. Is this your third visit, Brian? He's ignoring me.
- I'll say it's his third visit anyway. He can correct me. You're fifth. It's not. I made a big impression on you, obviously. Gosh. Really? Really.
- Wow. Anyway, five times. So that's good to have Brian with us. Brian is going to be teaching our New Testament 2 module this coming week.
- So that's everything from Acts through to Revelation. Monday night is an open night, which means it's free. So you can come along and join in from 7 to 10 p.m.
- [ 1 : 0 5 ] There's a break in between. And you can come along and listen to Brian and get a taster for yourself to hear and to see what it's all about. It might be a good way.
- And who knows? You might come back again. But it's good to have Brian with us. He's going to be speaking this morning. So, Brian, thank you so much for coming.
- And again, to have Denise and Jamie with us as well. It's lovely to have you all here today. Thank you so much. Well, it is good to be back.
- And it is five times, by the way. I promise. It's five. I don't know why I would say it's less than that. It is five. And we started, I think, in 2013-ish, something, 14.
- I don't know. And so it's really great to come back. And I know so many of you, some of you I don't know. Hope to get to know you today. Okay? Johnny had asked me to preach. A couple of weeks ago, he texted me and asked me to preach from a parable, maybe Matthew 18.
- [ 2 : 0 4 ] So I was surprised when I showed up this morning to find I'm preaching from Genesis, what is it, 37 to 50, which I guess I can do. Just have to adjust a little bit.
- So now I'm going to preach from Matthew 18 because that's what Johnny told me to do, regardless of what it says in your bulletin. And so what I'm going to do today is I'm going to read the parable.
- It's the parable of the unforgiving or unmerciful servant. But what I'm going to do is I'm going to read a little bit of it and then talk about it and then read a little bit. It's in three parts. But rather than read the whole thing from beginning to end, I think what I'll do is read a little bit and then, you know, let's go through it three sections at a time.
- But before I stop, before I stop, okay, one more time. Before I start, when we were driving to church this morning, we came by, we were going around the corner, and I saw a flashing sign.
- I had an arrow on it, and it said, slow, go slow. And the arrow was flashing, and it had, I guess, an Irish word. I think it's mall or something like that.
- [ 3 : 0 8 ] I probably didn't say that right. It looks like mall, M-A-L-L. I'm sure it means slow, right? So what do you do when you see that sign, especially if you're not familiar, right?

What would you do if you're driving down a lane and you see a sign like that? If you see a sign that says slow and it has a curved line on it, it's unlikely that you're going to floor it and go as fast as you can, right?

What are you going to do? You're going to slow. Why? Yeah, you have to take it easy because that sign is warning you, right? That's what signs do.

So yesterday we were down at, I think it's Myrtleville, and oddly there were people swimming yesterday. If you're from where we're from, we go as far south as we can to a place where the sand is so hot you can't stand on it, and then we'll get in the ocean, but not yesterday, right?

So there's people in the ocean. But let's pretend we're at Myrtleville, and you came down to go swimming. And I was down there, and you were getting ready to go in, and I said to you, well, no, no, no, no, don't go in because not only are the tides really bad, there's a chemical in the water that will surely kill you if you get in there.

[ 4 : 22 ] And let's pretend you knew me and had a reason to trust me. I'm not just some stranger telling you what to do. What would you do? Well, you probably, I would guess, you wouldn't go in, right?

You would, because I would warn you, right? Now, the surprising thing is if you would look at me and say, I don't care, and just ran straight into the water. But I would be warning you, and the idea was through the warning I would save your life because that's what warnings do.

And they do that in the Bible, too. Right? So, I mean, God uses warnings to save His people, so His people will persevere, so His people will continue on.

Right? But we all believe that God uses things, right? So God uses, say, preaching for people to come to faith. We all believe that. Right?

God uses prayer. Right? God uses evangelism. We believe all those things. But sometimes we don't think about how God also uses in the Bible warnings so that His people will continue on in the faith.

[ 5 : 31 ] And keep all that in mind for when we get to the end of this parable where there's a verse that can be a little bit tricky. Right? So, at the beginning of this parable, in chapter 18 of Matthew, just to give you a little bit of background, it's really important.

And in chapter 18, Jesus is speaking specifically to His disciples about what it looks like to be His disciples. Right? He's teaching them. This is what, if you're one of my followers, in the community of my followers, this is what you should be like.

So, it's really specific teaching to His disciples about who they should be. They should be like children towards one another. They need to be careful and thoughtful and kind and not be stumbling blocks to other people.

And He tells them what to do if they have a problem in the church with somebody who is sinning but they won't repent. And so, again, what He's doing specifically is He's teaching them what it looks like to be His followers.

Right? If you're a follower of Jesus, this is what life should look like for you. And that's where, and the parable's right in the middle of that. And so, He tells this parable because Peter comes up, this is in verse 21, Peter comes up and says to Jesus, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me?

[ 6 : 52 ] Up to seven times? Now, it could be that Peter had heard, like there was maybe a tradition that Peter had heard about and knew about. But it doesn't really matter, right, whether there was.

So the idea is that Peter comes up and asks Jesus a simple question, and that is, how many times do I have to forgive before I can stop forgiving? Right? Is there a time, is there a number I can get to, like, you know, that's five, six, one more.

And then I can sort of jump all over this person. Right? So He's got some idea that there's a limit. Right? That's all we need to know about. Right? Why Peter thought this doesn't really matter.

But He has some idea that there's some limit. You get to some point, right, there's a ceiling, and you reach that, and then you don't have to forgive anymore. And what does Jesus say?

Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. And some translations will say seventy times seven.

[ 7 : 53 ] So what Jesus is doing here is He's giving Peter a number that is exaggerated. Simply to say this.

When you're talking about forgiveness, you can't put a number on it. And so that's why He says seventy times seven, or seventy-seven times. It's just an infinite number of times.

Again, because what He's trying to say to Peter is, look, you're off to a bad start here when talking about forgiveness, because you're immediately thinking in terms of how much forgiveness. And so He completely kind of reroutes him.

And then you would think He'd be done. And then Jesus does what He always does. He starts to tell a story. It's really common for Jesus. People will ask Him a question, and He'll say, well, you know, the kingdom of heaven is like this.

And it'll be the way He answers a story. And so one of the things, why that matters for us, is a lot of times we think about telling a story, right, when you say something, or like if you're teaching, right, or you're just sharing something with somebody, you'll say, hey, you know, it's like this.

[ 9 : 02 ] And then you'll tell a story to make what you said clearer. Jesus does that sometimes, but a lot of times Jesus just teaches in a story. And I think that's what He does here. So Jesus tells Peter and the disciples this story, right?

And remember, how many times do I have to forgive? Seven times. And Jesus says, no, no number. You can't put a number on it. And then He says, therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

As he began the settlement, a man who owed him 10,000 bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master had ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

At this, the servant fell on his knees before him. Be patient with me, he begged, and I will pay back everything. The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go.

So we'll stop right there just for now. So Jesus tells us, okay, this parable is all about the kingdom of heaven. This is about the kingdom that Jesus is bringing.

[ 10 : 14 ] This is what life looks like in the kingdom. And so he tells this story, right? We have this king, and in the story, in the story, the king, the king has the power to forgive sins.

And that's all we need to think about, right? It's not, that's the big thing here. That's the one thing that Jesus is emphasizing here with this king is he has the power to start to forgive debt. And so the guy comes up, and if you have a, I have an NIV, I'm reading from the NIV, and he's selling these accounts.

He says he owes 10,000 bags of gold. Now, you might have a different translation that says maybe 10,000 talents. Does anybody have that in their translation, talents, right?

Or maybe you've heard of that. And so talent is just, a talent is just a weight, right? It's a measurement. It's not like money. And so if you had, imagine a scale, right?

And in the first century, if you had this, things would be measured according to a talent. So a talent, which would be a certain amount of weight on one side, and if you had gold coins, you put them on the other, and then you know how much the gold coins are worth, right?

[ 11 : 21 ] Because it would weigh out against this weight called a talent. And so the idea here, though, is you have this servant, and he owes 10,000 bags of gold.

Now, that is an impossible amount. Right? And I think Jesus knows this, and I think everybody listening to this story would know this.

This is an impossible amount. Now, that causes some people to say, well, how could a servant have that much debt? Well, it doesn't matter, because he's a person in a story, right?

And so it doesn't really matter how he could get 10,000 bags of gold in debt. The thing is, is he has an impossible debt. That's the point. Right?

And so Jesus just uses this gigantic number to make it already sound impossible. Right? So he's just exaggerating. It's like, so I have a way of doing this.

[ 12 : 17 ] Everything to me is either a countable amount, or it's a million. Everything to me is a million. Right? I mean, I've told you a million times. Right? It costs like a million dollars.

If I can't afford something, it costs a million. And that's just the, that's the number I use. It's just, it's my way of saying, I'm not very good at math, and it's a lot of money. Right? I can, it's a few dollars, I get that.

If it's more than a few dollars, then it's a million. And that's what Jesus is doing here. So this guy owes, he owes more than he could ever pay back. And it doesn't matter how he, how he got this much debt.

That's not even a question. Right? Because he's just a guy in a story. And Jesus is trying to make a point. Since he's 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.

So this guy is hopeless, right? Because what, if this is an impossible amount, and this guy's going to be sold, his wife's going to be sold, just to pay back the debt, he's got no hope.

[ 13 : 25 ] That's, that's the idea, right? He's standing before this king, he owes this king an impossible amount of money, there's no way for him to pay it back, and now he's about to lose everything. And then the servant, though, fell on his knees before the king, and said, be patient with me, I will pay back everything.

Now, if you think about it, when's that going to be? He's not going to be able to do it. But he, he does the only thing he can do before the king.

He has no other, no other option. So he, he begs for mercy. And that's, and the king, it says, the servant, right, the servant's master took pity on him and canceled the debt, let him go.

Right? That's it. All free. So in the, in the parable, in the parable, as we'll see, the king sort of stands for God. And we'll, this makes really, really clear at the end.

But the idea here is just this one point, is that the, the master, or if you, if you're, if you're, if your translation has king or master, the idea is, this king can completely forgive the debt, the servant cannot pay back the debt, he is completely beholden to the king and the king's mercy, that's it.

[ 14 : 40 ] It's not really teaching, it's not really teaching, if you just beg enough, finally God will forgive your sins. Right?

Because it's, it's not really that, about that. It's just about, this is the only option this guy has. Right? It's just this king. The king doesn't do everything that God does. God doesn't do everything the king does. It's just one point where the king is being compared to what God is like, and that is, able to forgive.

And that's it. Right? It's just that one, sort of narrow focus. That's what's happening here. The king is able to forgive. And he forgives this guy after the guy says, after the guy just begs for mercy.

He fell on his knees and begs. And he canceled the debt and let him go. All right, so that's the end of the first part. And that's what it looks like when grace outweighs debt.

Right? That's it. When grace outweighs debt, when grace weighs more than debt, that's what it looks like. And so this guy, life has changed pretty radically. You think, until the next part.

[ 15 : 51 ] So then he goes out, and when the servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants, who owed him 100 silver coins.

Now, that's not very much by comparison. Right? Not at all. In fact, if you want to just, I'll give you a little bit of math, because I had my daughter check it. So I'm pretty sure this is right.

Essentially, what the servant owed the king is about 170,000 years wages. I'm not, I mean, I checked this, and my daughter checked it.

She's really good at math. I'm no good, but we checked it. Right? So there's a coin in those days called a denarii, and that's about one day's wages. And it would equal up to get 10,000 bags of gold, or the 10,000 talents.

It would, you would have to work like 170,000 years. This isn't impossible. Nobody could ever pay this amount back. Right? So that's how much he owed the king.

[ 16 : 56 ] 170,000 years of wages. Right? Now, again, the idea is impossible amount. That's all. Right? You don't have to think, well, how could he get that much debt? Why did he have this much debt?

Was he doing something on the side that was causing him to get? No, there's none of those sort of questions. But when you come to the next part, it's a lot of debt, but it's really manageable, and you can understand it.

Especially in comparison. And that's the idea. Right? The idea is, in the first section of the parable, you have an amount that you can't even imagine. It is beyond imagining. And in the second one, you have a number that is well within your imagination.

And you can completely grasp and understand how much that is. And that's why. Because they're contrasted with each other in a very extreme way.

And so, the guy comes, he comes out and he sees a fellow servant who owes him a hundred silver coins. That's it. Which would be, more or less, if this matters, it would be more or less, plus or minus, a little bit, four months of wages.

[ 18 : 03 ] Which is a lot. But nowhere near 170,000 years of wages. Right? So it could be done. And so, what you would expect, right, if you had never heard this story before, I'm sure you've all heard this story before.

If you'd never heard this story before, what would you expect this guy to do? When he runs into this guy who comes up and says, hey, I know I owe you, you know, I know I owe you, what, how much is it again?

A hundred silver coins. You would expect him to say what? Hey, listen, seriously, I don't care. You're not going to believe it. I just had 10,000 bags of gold forgiven.

We'll just let this slide for now. Right? Or at the very least, maybe he would say something like, you know what, just get it to me next week. Right? Which would still be weird, but anything, you would expect anything other than what happens next.

Just because, just the difference. Having been forgiven all this debt and now, faced with a friend who does owe him, there's no doubt, right? There's no question about it.

[ 19 : 08 ] The guy does owe him something. It's not, does he owe, it's not as though he owes him nothing. He doesn't legitimately owe him something. Right? So the guy could say, well, you know, you can pay me a little bit now, a little bit later, but really, I think that everybody would expect him to say, listen, I don't even want to talk about that right now.

I just basically had my whole life saved just now. So we'll talk about this thing later. Because you just can't compare the two things. But what does the guy do? Well, he's kind of an extreme guy.

Before he says anything, he goes straight to choking. That's his number one, that's his first response. And then he starts saying, give me what you owe, right?

So this is the guy's response. He sees the guy who owes him money. He's just had an impossible amount forgiven. He sees the guy who owes him money and he does what? He just goes straight for choking.

No discussion, no sort of negotiation, no payment plan, just choking. That's his answer. And he starts yelling at him, pay back what you owe me.

[ 20 : 19 ] And then you think, okay, we're up to a bad start. But then in the story, Jesus has the guy, the other servant, say something that should sound really familiar. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, be patient with me and I will pay it back.

What does that sound like? It's exactly what this man had said to the king earlier. Exact line. Be patient with me and I will pay it back.

So again, if you imagine just for a moment that you hadn't heard this story before, you might think, okay, that's going to click in this guy's mind, right? He's going to get it. He's going to hear that and say, oh, you know what, maybe I should stop with all the choking and ease up on that a little bit and maybe be patient with this guy and remember that I just had more money than I could ever pay back forgiven.

Yeah, maybe I should rethink what I'm doing here. You know, because he hears his own words, the very words that he had spoken to the king that resulted in him being forgiven of all of his debt, he hears right back to him just moments later.

And then in verse 30, but he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown in prison until he could pay the debt.

[ 21 : 49 ] Right? So, the very thing that he was, not just he, he was threatened with that, his wife, his family, all of his, everybody, he and his family were all threatened with that very thing earlier because of what he owed the king and it was all forgiven him.

And then he goes out, he meets his servant, his buddy, who's also a servant and who owes him an amount, it's a lot, but he can pay it back. And what does he do? Same punishment. The same punishment that he was threatened with before, he now, he now, not just threatened, he has it done.

So, there has been zero effect in this guy's life, right? I mean, that's where the parable is going. There is no effect whatsoever in the forgiveness that this guy received.

None. It hasn't even made a dent. And the fact that, and then, that's even, that's highlighted by the fact that he runs into a situation that's exactly like the situation he was just in.

So, he's not like the king at all. He has none of the same characteristics. Even when put in the exact same situation, except with this difference, he owed an impossible amount.

[ 23 : 05 ] His friend owed him an amount that could be paid back. And he shows no reflection whatsoever of the king. So, when we read this story, when you read a story like this, it's really easy for us, and I do this a lot, it's really easy to come to this guy and think, oh, that guy's awful.

And he is, right? There's really no, like, well, you know, he's kind of bad, but he's probably of some good qualities. This guy has no good qualities, as far as we know. None. But again, remember, he's just a guy in a story.

He's not like a, not like he has a whole personality, right? He's just a guy in a story, and this is what he does. He owes money, he gets forgiven, then he chokes people who owes, that's his whole life. Doesn't do anything other than that.

But it's easy to read the story and think, oh, that guy, that guy, I can't wait until he gets what's coming to him. Right? I mean, anybody, or is it just me?

Am I the only person who reads the story and thinks, I cannot wait for the next part when we get to find out what happens to this guy? Well, there's a good reason we do that, but we should probably slow down a little bit when we see characters like this in the Bible.

[ 24 : 15 ] And yeah, we don't have to say, we don't have to condone, obviously, what they're doing, but we should slow down a little bit and just ask ourselves, is there maybe a little bit of a mirror here?

Not that you've ever choked somebody who owed you money or anything like that. But it's easy, especially in the Gospels, right? It's easy when you're reading the Gospels to kind of immediately side with like the good guys, right?

Like the woman who washes Jesus' feet. Right? Obviously, she's good. Right? Or when people come up and they clearly believe in Jesus and trust in Jesus.

And we should, right? We immediately kind of side with them. But then like the Pharisees show up and we're like, oh, these Pharisees are awful. Now, they are awful. But we have a way of like, they're awful.

Obviously, I would be different. Right? Or when the disciples do something that is, they make a mistake. And they make plenty of mistakes. But we kind of look at when they make mistakes and think, oh, those guys.

[ 25 : 21 ] Those guys are dummies. Right? I never would have made that mistake. Right? I would have taken Jesus to Jerusalem in three seconds to die if it had been me.

Right? So, you know what I'm talking about? Remember this story? He tells Peter and the disciples, I'm going down to Jerusalem and Peter says, no, you're not. Right? Which is not the right answer. But, I mean, can you imagine saying, that sounds like a great plan for you to go die.

Let's put you on a cart and get you there as fast as we can. But we tend to look at when people do wrong things and we should, they're there for us to see that they're doing wrong things and to hear that they're doing wrong things.

But at the same time, we do need to, like, turn the word around like a mirror. Do I need to see what's happening? No. Okay. Just wanted to make sure.

It is like a mirror that we need to be able to see. You know what? Maybe I don't choke people. Maybe I'm not as extreme as this guy. But I can remember times where I have not extended forgiveness to people.

[ 26 : 33 ] I can remember times when I knew ahead of time I was already having an argument with that person in my mind before I got there. I knew ahead of time what that guy was going to say to me because I know what he's like.

And in my mind I'm thinking what that discussion is going to be like and I'm already upset thinking about a discussion that's only happened in my imagination. And then when I get to wherever I'm going I see that person I'm already like upset with them over something that just took place in my imagination.

And so I need to read this story and look at this guy and think, you know what? You know who can be unforgiving? Me. You know who's been forgiven an impossible amount more than I could have ever owed that would have taken all eternity and I could never have paid it back in all eternity?

And then I hold things over against other people you know who's done that? Me. So again we don't have to look at this guy and try to make excuses for him right? That's not the alternative like well you know maybe he's had a bad day or maybe this guy nothing like that so we don't have to make excuses for him we do need to recognize that he is a wicked person but we also need to think yeah you know what?

I can be unforgiving too especially you know when I think about what's been forgiven what I've been forgiven and so now we come to the third part of the story and this is what it looks like this is what it looks like when debt is weighed right?

[ 28 : 09 ] This is the full weight of debt this is what it looks like and the guy comes back so he has this friend put into prison other servants saw what happened they go straight to the king and they went and told their master everything that had happened then you come to verse 32 then the master called the servant in you wicked servant now in some ways we're done we're done it's like he's already passed judgment on him you wicked servant I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you in anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he should pay back all that he owed right so here he is standing before the king again and what's the king's basis for judging him the king's basis for judging in the first part right the king's basis for judging the guy was the debt that he owed yeah what's the basis for him judging him now it's simple it's the basis upon which the king dealt with him the first time with which right in the first time the king forgave him all of his debt and now that becomes that becomes the basis that becomes the foundation for how the king judges this guy the second time and he says

I forgave all of your debt because you begged me and again like I said before it's really important this parable Jesus is not not at all teaching that if you just beg God enough he will finally forgive your sons right because remember the point the point of connection with God in this is just the he's able and powerful and merciful to forgive that's it it's not teaching everything the bible has to teach about what forgiveness looks like or if you just beg enough you get forgiven right so that's it's got this one thing Jesus after this one thing not all the things but the idea here the idea here is the guy had his debt forgiven because he asked to be forgiven just like his friend had asked him to be patient with him so he's being judged on what he's being judged on this basis that he doesn't at all reflect his king at all right there's he has no there's no sort of no way to recognize him there's no way to recognize him in light of his king he doesn't look like him he doesn't act like him he doesn't talk like him nothing he's not like him at all which then raises a question right raises a question about not the king but this guy and he says to him shouldn't you have had mercy just as



I had on you and of course the answer would be yes just as you received you should give in anger his master turned over to the jailers to be tortured until he should pay back all his when's that going to be never right because it's already we started that's where we started right it's an impossible amount and so that's where it ends if it ended there anyway we'd be we just would have a really we have a really thoughtful story about how we should be forgiving right because we've been forgiven and if it ended there we'd have a lot to think about a lot to talk about but Jesus doesn't end it there though sometimes we might wish that he had because he goes on to make a comment at the end where he makes it really really clear what he's been talking about and this comment is can be kind of troubling because he turns to his disciples and says this is how my heavenly father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from the heart right and that's sort of the part we wish maybe Jesus had just kept to himself right or before we could just be like well yeah

I need to be more forgiving it'd be better to be more forgiving it's better to be forgiving I've been forgiven a lot I should be more forgiving and that's kind of how we would deal with it and that'd be okay though we could always let ourselves off the hook right if you're me I'm like well I'm mostly forgiving right I mean some people more you know it's easier to forgive some people than others but Jesus sort of takes that conversation out of the way for a moment and just says it plainly right this is how my heavenly father will treat each one of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from the heart now when Matthew wrote his gospel and he includes this parable right he would have he would have assumed that this would not be the first time people heard Jesus say something like this this is the third time Jesus has said almost this very thing or something similar in Matthew and the first time he says it he says it in a place that's really familiar and that is in the

Sermon on the Mount I'll just read it for you it's back in it's back in Matthew chapter five it's lost it actually oh sorry sorry I meant to say six that's my thought six six fourteen six fourteen for if you forgive other people when they sin against you your heavenly father will also forgive you but if you do not forgive other sins your heavenly father will not forgive your sins that's very very similar sort of similar idea right and then just right before that by the way in the in the Lord's Prayer forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors right forgive us and so you have this idea it's already there in Matthew this idea that the people of

[ 34 : 28 ] God will be forgiving if not they're not forgiven so it sort of sounds like this right that God forgives you as long as you will forgive somebody else or that he forgives you and then says okay I've forgiven you now you're kind of on a probation period and I'm just going to see how you do right now you might immediately think no that's not how it works right that makes sense but that's kind of how it sounds is that yeah okay we're forgiven and now God and God's like God unconditionally forgives us and then says all right now I got my eye on you and the first time you mess up and don't forgive somebody you're out you're done it could sound like that I don't think that's what it's doing but it could sound that way so let's just think about it for a moment number one Jesus is again teaching his disciples what it looks like or what how they should be what it looks like for them to be his disciples and his disciples should be forgiving just as he is forgiving so this is again so he's not just teaching everything that could be said about forgiveness that's what he's really after is he's shaping and forming them to be his disciples that they would be forgiving others just as they have been forgiven and this is a sign that they are his true his true followers the other thing to do as we're looking at this parable is just to consider right is that forgiveness from God forgiveness for God is for is for a debt that we could never have paid back and that

Jesus's death on the cross is what has paid for our sins and that Jesus is speaking here to people who are forgiven yet he warns them and he warns us right because it's not just a story about a warning to the disciples right it'd be a warning to us too but it's spoken to people who are his children to people who are already his disciples right Matthew is writing this to to Christians to people who are confessing Jesus as Lord so what's so what's happening here so the what I think is happening here is Jesus is giving them a warning so they will understand the necessity of forgiveness the importance of forgiveness and not treat it as like icing on the cake and in doing so Jesus will save them he will keep them he will keep them this way by warning them just like earlier I was talking about what warnings do right so God preserves his people and he does this partially not only the way but one of the ways God preserves us is by warning us about what happens if we don't act and we aren't like his children the idea being that the true people of God will hear this and think I need to take forgiveness seriously

I can't sort of mess around here not because I need to earn my forgiveness not because God is like got me on a short leash and he's sort of forgiven me is like like you're forgiven for now but maybe later you won't be forgiven the idea is the idea is that the people of God will hear this and be forgiving because they understand what their heavenly father has done for them and they will also understand what he is like and I want to suggest to you is when you're reading through the New Testament and you see warnings that's exactly what the warnings are meant to do it is God's gracious way of keeping you to keep you to continue on to persevere God does that and he does it through warnings just like the way God saves you through people preaching the gospel and not apart from it right just like the way God saves people through evangelism just like the way God works through prayer it's not as though God is not you know it's not as though God is is thinking well you know I would say that guy if I could just get somebody to speak to that guy otherwise I can't save him of course God can but God has chosen to do what God has chosen to call us to himself through the preaching of the word through the gospel and what I would say is the warnings do a similar thing God has chosen to if you will get our attention in these warnings so that we will continue on living like his people now ultimately of course yeah we need to say this ultimately of course if somebody would prove to never be forgiving then it would reflect back on whether or not they were actually ever a believer in the first place but if you think about this think about again again Jesus is not rebuking his disciples here he's exhorting them he's not sort of lecturing them he's not mad at them he's not angry at them he's not even angry at Peter he's just answering

Peter's question so he's exhorting them to live like those who have been forgiven and his expectation is this that people who have been forgiven will hear this story and respond in the right way and think yeah yeah I've been forgiven everything and yet I hold such little things over people even though I've been forgiven all things and I think that's what Jesus is meaning to do here right he's not he's not just threatening them right Jesus doesn't just threaten you better forgive or you're out that is not what's happening here it's Jesus simply saying my people will be like their heavenly father who has forgiven them everything and I think if we can read it that way and we can understand that God graciously gives us warnings not threats but warnings then we can receive those and then it can be more we can take forgiveness more seriously in terms of living living together now I do want to be clear about something about many things actually sometimes people will read a text like this about forgiveness and there are people and there's maybe people in this room who you struggle every day to forgive someone or people who have done horrible things and sometimes people who have suffered horrible things at the hands of others are overly pressured and all of a sudden the pressures on them you need to forgive now of course people need to be forgiving but we want to be careful that we don't read a text like this and if you know or if you if you know someone or maybe yourself have just been have suffered just unspeakable things at the hands of other people

Jesus is not saying to you you better forgive them as though it's just like a formula right that's not what's happening here right so we sometimes will take people who like horrible things have happened to and then we'll pile on top of them this sort of responsibility that you better forgive once and for all and finally right now now not realizing that forgiveness might be something that people have to come to over time and maybe many times and not just once like you just did it I'm just done right just like everything else we live by faith and we continue to live that way and forgiveness is not just a simple one-time thing and we want to be careful we want to be careful you know when people are in particular situations where forgiveness is next to impossible feeling we don't want to make them feel like you know you you might even be saved unless you forget because it might be their lifelong sort of persevering struggle to do that and we're to walk alongside them and encourage them not keep a burden on them and so we want to be careful we want to be careful when we take a text like this that we don't sort of then use it right to that we don't we don't want to misuse it that's all I'm trying to say right not with ourselves not with others right we don't want to take the edge off of it we do want to encourage and obviously encourage in all of us a life of forgiveness where we look like our heavenly we look like our heavenly father but you don't want to take a text like this and then pile it on as an extra burden on top of somebody who is already living with maybe more burden than they can bear and remember it's God who judges the heart and it's God who judges forgiveness and what forgiveness looks like and forgiveness might sort of look differently depending on different situations and so that's one thing the other thing is Jesus is careful to say forgive from the heart I think the idea is that it's a new heart that has been made new by Jesus's death and resurrection it's a reminder in this parable that our lives are a hundred percent based on grace and so in other words what it does is Jesus is talking about forgiveness in a particularly

[ 44 : 03 ] Christian way he's taking it out of sort of the realm of the way the world might talk about forgiveness in terms of I forgive if right so you know what I mean so in other words it's easy to forgive people if we just sort of wait for somebody to do something then like okay but there's no like if somebody does something I'll forgive he is showing us what he's showing us what it looks like to be recreated so that we're like our heavenly father who has forgiven us all things but I don't think there's some sort of expectation that like why you like wake up one morning like ah I forgive everything that happens all the time immediately that's not the idea right because the idea would be we would continually come back to this text and read it and read it and read it and read it not just a one-time fix because remember Jesus is patient with his disciples I talked about earlier how they they make mistakes and it's really clear like we do but you know one of the things Jesus says he doesn't give up on them he continues to teach them even when they make huge mistakes and the same thing for you right so you don't want to take this text and all of a sudden turn it back on yourself and be sort of defeated by it so one of the things that happens I think we see a text like this is we come forgiveness starts by confessing ourselves that we're not forgiving it's not just oh you know woe is me now there's more burden on me you turn to

God who does what who forgives sins so step number one if you want to become and I do if we do if all of us do want to become more forgiving people step number one is not just say all right I'm going to be more forgiving I turn this into a new work for me and I'm going to show I'm going to prove that I'm a Christian because now I'm going to be more forgiving step number one is to turn to God and confess you know what Lord I have not been forgiving towards this person towards that person or maybe just in general that's always step one why because we're turning to the God who does what forgives so if we want to become more like our Heavenly Father who forgives we can never turn from him or turn away from him we need to turn to him constantly for forgiveness not just forgiveness in the past when you got saved but forgiveness every day because he's the one who forgives right without measure without weighing right he will and if you've been struggling with forgiving somebody or let's just say somebody over and over again it's not as though you're going to come to God and he's like you know what this is the 50th time you've prayed to me about that right I've had enough just get it done that's not how

God is going to treat you God when you turn to God in prayer he never looks at you and he's like oh you again you know we did this yesterday we've been doing this for five years that's not that's how we react but not God and so no matter how much you might feel burdened by just an inability to maybe forgive or extend forgiveness to others turn to God with that because he knows and he's there to do what to forgive you so that you can be forgiving and so the last thing I'll say is this I mentioned it before for us forgiveness is continual and it's not perfect as we continue on in the Christian life right it's not perfect but we are being perfected in

Jesus and we just have to always count we just have to always remember I just have a way right my sins according to God and I confess Jesus in Jesus this is true that all of my sins no matter what they are have been forgiven yet I can hold the slightest little thing over someone and not then compare it to and you put it in the balance you can't even balance them and so that's what I would want to leave you with today as I close as you look at this just just start thinking about all of us need to start thinking about the fact that it is the things often not the huge things but often like daily things let's just think about daily things not catastrophic things the little daily things that maybe we find so difficult to forgive and put those in light of all the of what we've been forgiven that is all of our sins and then to give thanks to God for his word that directs us back to him because the thing that I when I was when

I was getting ready for this sermon the thing that I kept coming back to as I was looking at it was it kept pointing me back to my absolute need every day of forgiveness for before God and from God and that without God's forgiveness me being a forgiving person that's not going to happen because I'm always going to forgive if somebody kind of does the right thing if you leave it up to me but God has freed us God has freed you and God has freed me that we don't have to wait for another person to do like the right thing we can extend forgiveness and you can extend forgiveness and if they don't act in the right way immediately and recognize that you've forgiven them or that you're treating them different that's okay because you've been set free from that you've been set free from having to rely on how others act or even react to you because you've been forgiven everything by God and

[ 50 : 07 ] God no longer looks at you as a center let's pray together father I pray that you'll make this word true in us hope it to be more than just something we hear and then go about our business we thank you for how gracious gracious you are that you direct us and even warn us and that you do so because you love us and you want us to continue to grow and mature in you until the day that we reach heaven and we understand and realize full forgiveness forever and we pray this in Christ's name amen