

The Unforgiving Servant - Matthew 18:21-35

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[0 : 0 0] Well, thank you, Josh and team for leading us in worship and thank you, Josh for praying for us Good morning church Good morning church One time the more church That's what I'm talking about The awake days of August Well, we are going to begin a new series this morning a short series Entitled parables the stories that Jesus told and We've organized them so that we'll begin we'll look at two servants then two seeds and then two builders We're feeling really clever and proud of ourselves for organizing that way So please affirm all of us at some point, but why don't you join me and let's pray Before we dive into the text. We're going to be in Matthew 18 This morning looking at verses 21 through 35

But let's pray Come now let us reason together says the Lord Though your sins are like scarlet They shall be as white as snow Though they are red like crimson They shall become like wool Father it is a privilege To gather this morning and we have come here specifically to meet with you We counted a privilege to be able to do that with other brothers and sisters And Lord as hard it is as it is to believe Some days It is true That because Of what you accomplished Lord Jesus through your death burial and resurrection

That we stand here not condemned That there is no scarlet letter written upon us But just the beautiful blood that you shed for us And so we have much to Relish in and to celebrate this morning Father would you minister to your people Lord if there's folks that are here that have been They've just been struggling In life perhaps there's trials that they continue to Walk in or feel the effects of perhaps some here are Continuing to struggle with the setting sin And I ask God that you would accomplish something Remarkable and powerful in each of our lives today Thank you for your Holy Spirit that indwells us. Thank you for your word that guides us

And Lord thank you for the community of your people Thank you for your word that guides us and Lord thank you for the community of believers that reminds us that In this we are not alone We love you Jesus and we commit this time to you now and it's in your name. We pray Amen So we are going to begin this series In the parables stories Children love stories you notice that I've never had a any of my children ever come to me and say dad could you Could you tell me some facts this evening before I go to bed?

They tell what do they say tell me a story right tell me a story And I do that today I feel that in my spirit when I open a book. I think this is common amongst people We seem to binge watch and binge read because We love stories In fact, I would say that God hardwired people To love stories and I think centrally because we are participants in a grand story a grand narrative The unfolding story of redemption And so we love stories What do we love about them What we love that they engage our minds they Age our imaginations A good storyteller has the ability to take someone on a

[5 : 0 1] Wonderful journey to transport them in fact to another world um In fact, some of us start reading a good book and it seems that the world around us just melts away I see mark lopez giving me an amen in the back Because it is rumored that he read bruchko this week in one sitting He was on the dock and he just kept saying one more chapter and then he missed dinner We love stories I would suggest to us that the best stories are those Am I am I going in and out here and I don't know if it's me But I'm As hooked up as I can possibly be All right um I would suggest the stories The best stories are those that that teach us They They leave a mark upon us

They take abstract Trues And they put flesh on them They incarnate True and beautiful and eternal concepts To us take for instance victor hugos lay miss rob we see these concepts of mercy and grace and redemption and we learn about them as we follow This life who is given a second chance or the film saving private ryan We're instructed on honor and duty and sacrifice And we learn about these through the story of a platoon willing to give up everything to preserve the life of a lone soldier

Jesus understood the power of story Instructing a person through the side door of their imagination Kirkegaard in the 19th century said this about parables. He said They are a form of indirect communication Intended to deceive the hearer into the truth Not that scripture is deceiving but Through stories our imaginations are engaged And our defenses are down and often we receive truth In an unexpected way Nathan the prophet did this with David Right David, let me tell you a story About this wealthy man who takes the single lamb of this poor man Because he wants to host a dinner, but he doesn't want to sacrifice his own and David responds with how dare he? And Nathan says exactly how dare he? How dare he? Well parables Compare 35% of Jesus's teaching in this synoptics And if you want a simple definition of what is a parable this word actually Translates to set beside It's an analogy or think of it this way it is an extended analogy It's a comparison that is given in order to teach So how does God love a sinner Will imagine a father forgiving a wayward son Oh I get it I get it Why did Jesus teach in parables? Why did he move to this style of instruction in his teaching ministry?

well In fact, he tells us in massy 1313 He says this This is why speak to them in parables Because seeing they do not see And hearing they do not hear nor do they understand And the same thing is happening today 2nd Timothy 3 Says that in the later days there will be those that are always learning and never able to come to an arrival of knowledge A knowledge of the truth And so Those that should have understood the spiritual leaders Always chose not to understand and so there is a dual purpose in Jesus using parables to teach He uses them both to reveal truth As well as conceal truth And we've already seen and talked about the power of stories to teach so they certainly reveal truth, but they also conceal it

[10:07] See Jesus ceased to proclaim His kingdom message in unveiled terms After he's accused by the spiritual leadership Of representing satan In fact, it says in Matthew 12 24 They accused Jesus it's only by the power by the prince of demons That this man casts out demons And so Jesus storytelling is both an act of judgment upon them But it's also an act of mercy or grace And you say, gee, how is that grace if he's veiling truth to those who have repeatedly rejected him?

Well, I think Jesus is diminishing the wrath That the unbeliever is storing up for the day of judgment And it talks about that in Romans 2 5 But this morning we have a parable before us Our first one and it is the parable of the unforgiving servant So let's begin here in verse 21 Set some context 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 Jesus said to him, I do not say to you seven times, but 77 times Or rather 70 times seven The passage can work either way Depending on the version that you have Jesus here in Matthew 18, he just finishes

Giving instructions to the church in terms of how to correct a brother caught in sin And this provokes a question from Peter So we're wanting to restore those to the fellowship of the body and how many times should we forgive them?

And so Peter asked that question, but what Peter is Actually asking here, it's practical, but it's robustly theological because the question actually is what are the limits to forgiveness? Are there limits to grace? Are there limits to grace? And Peter being Peter He asks the question and then he answers his own question Which is incredibly bad form Especially when you're speaking to God But he asked the question how many times should I forgive my brother and then he Decides in fact that he knows the answer and he says ah seven times That's the answer Peter is so dumb um Because we know what he's doing here church I mean he's telegraphing this punch What he's trying to do he's really groveling for affirmation From Jesus and I'm so glad social media was not around when Peter was around Because Peter would be the guy posting himself online with a pouty the pouty lips

[13:42] Right and having little captions underneath like bad day Or so sad so that everybody would in spot in turn go. Oh, but you look so good Peter. Oh, you're you're so great Peter Oh It's so good that he doesn't have social media But amen, um Peter says seven because he knows the teaching of the day and the rabbis of the day We're saying that if a brother sins against you you should ever give them up to three times And so Peter comes up with this magnanimous Answer of seven times. I'm four beyond the rabbis Jesus, where is my gold star?

Peter reminds me of myself a bit when I announced to my wife that Hey, hun. Did you notice I emptied the dishwasher? Um Yeah Yeah It's a I will be standing here a long time Because I will most likely get a response Such as you mean you put away the dishes that you ate off of Amazing I mean if you put it like that, I guess it's really not that big of a deal Well, Jesus corrects Peter in

similar fashion Peter not seven times But 70 times seven and Jesus here is not giving an actual number. It's like, oh

It's either 77 or 490 times and then we're done and there's a ceiling. That's not what he's communicating He's essentially telling Peter that forgiveness. It just goes well beyond Anything you think that you have capacity for In fact, there's no ceiling to grace in my economy Church, this is shocking Shocking And here we perceive Early in this parabolic ministry of Jesus that the kingdom of God is so not like anything we have ever known Did Jesus just say what I think he said There's no way doesn't he know what this person did to me And it's the tenth time He's so out of touch Well, Jesus in order for those around him to

Ingest this truth he illustrates for clarification and this is where we find this parable Verses 23 to 25 let's begin here Jesus says therefore The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants When he began to settle one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents 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 So we have some initial characters that we are introduced to here. There is a king And there is a leading servant of his we'll just call him servant number one And the day that we find them in is the day of settling accounts And this king calls the servant forward and says hey you need to return the funds

That actually belong to me And so perhaps this servant is some sort of tax collector governor The story doesn't tell us so we conjecture But the main thing that we learn about this servant is this He owes the king a massive amount of money And for any of you that have ever been in debt or perhaps are in debt You know the weight of that You know the anxiety of that the burden of that You don't know the burden of this man 10,000 talents As an aside when we read in scripture Talents that is not actual currency or coinage. That's a way to measure coinage a talent is a weight [18:53] And it's a weight that would it be equivalent to 60 to 80 we'll just say 75 pounds Which would be the weight Equal to 6,000 silver coins So one talent is worth 6,000 silver coins or denari So 10,000 talents Would be 750,000 pounds of coins 375 tons So let me put it to you in terms you can understand that's the weight of 75 elephants stacked in a pyramid That is a lot of coins and the image that we have here is The image of the dragon smog in the lonely mountain

Just resting upon a mountain of treasure. That's what this man owes to the king See just one talent Is 6,000 silver coins The daily wage of a servant was one silver coin So here's our story problem church We're doing math Worse sermon ever Jay was having us do story problems I've worked this out in my head so I've got to share How many years would it take to pay off the debt that you owe this king?

6,000 coins 10,000 talents divided by 365 days How many years would it take you to pay off this debt?

It would be 164,000 years And that would be equivalent to roughly six billion dollars in today's currency What happened to the money? Where did the money go? That's what you're all wondering I don't know And Jesus doesn't tell us Well, you owe that sort of uh debt How are you going to respond?

Well, let's see how the servant responds verse 26 and 27 So the servant Fell to his knees I mean, I'm thinking this is probably the only way to go at this point Imploring him Have patience with me and I will pay you everything There is no way And out of pity for him the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt Church the key to this parable is that this in fact is an unpayable debt This man did not have enough lifetime to pay off this debt. That's the point A parable is to lay beside to compare church our sin

[22:47] Cannot be undone No matter how many lifetimes we have to try and counteract it Sin is so ugly. It is so offensive to perfect and holy god that we are left utterly helpless And it really takes us to the end of ourselves that we are lost That we are lost just like this servant And then the most Unlikely thing occurs Out of pity for him the master released him and forgave the debt Church this is a picture of astonishing forgiveness This is the gospel this is our story And so we cannot be a people that gather gather in a casual manner

When we gather on a Sunday, this is precious time. This is sacred time Why are we here?

Because we have experienced astonishing forgiveness That's it. That's it The king ate the debt the king endured injury to liberate this man Think about it six billion dollars for one single man This appears to be the worst trade ever But church this is the god that we worship and that's why we worship him Are you valuable? You know what this story roars? Absolutely. Absolutely Are you too

sinful to be forgiven?

Not at all Not at all But jay, I don't like to take handouts too bad Because Jesus is the only one that has words of eternal life So get in line behind Peter too bad So humble your pride and say lord I am a sinner and I cannot undo my sin I need your mercy. I need your forgiveness. Take it Take it. It's for you too Well, that's for the person next to me. No, it's for you. It's for you Forgiveness of this sort It's astonishing and it is This power that this world that we live in cannot begin to understand You know, we live on a planet of ungrace We live in a time where there is just There's such a lack of kindness I don't understand news reports of of people being pulled out of cars and shot at point blank and And it just appears to be so so dark and evil and random and nonsensical It's like what what have we become as a people?

[26 : 32] And then we hear from Jesus Do we Are we able to ingest the enormity of the debt that we possessed before him?

Isaiah says In 646 that our righteous deeds were like a polluted garment Actual translation like a menstrual rag J. S. Gross that's sin. That's sin and we have been forgiven And this story church would be marvelous This would be a great way to end not on the image of a menstrual rag But on the celebration of the debt that we have been forgiven But that's not where Jesus decides to end the story. In fact, he continues He says verse 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 So this fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him Have patience with me And I will pay you

He refused And went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt Who's troubled By the actions Of servant number one towards servant number two any of you any of you troubled any of you Liars no keep your hands down any of you tell the truth hands up. Okay You should be troubled If you're not troubled you really need to go talk to pass the scot after the message. Okay. You it should bother you Why does it bother us And in fact It actually Shouldn't because servant number one was actually acting Within his legal rights. He wasn't acting unjustly This is brilliant church Jesus is the best storyteller

Because in fact he has just told us a story In such a way that we are actually disgusted by the actions of the good guy He's like a Filmmaker who just who tells a story from the angle of where you begin to root for the bad guys You ever seen a film like that?

I'm not endorsing but the whole godfather trilogy like you you you love the corleone family You're like, they're the best we want to see them succeed. What? See this story If it began with this exchange between these servants We would be rooting for servant number one to get paid the debt the servant number two owed him No way yes way Some of you know that our family we've been on this year and a half Journey battle to recoup some money from a builder who built us a just a train wreck of a house and We paid top dollar for our house year old mold growing in the walls And many of you who knew this kind of we were going through this you're like man, we want justice for pastor j We want justice. See you're rooting for me. I serve in number one Serving number one Think of it this way servant number two is a renter

[30 : 28] And hasn't paid his rent for a year And servant number one is the landlord. He's like you're killing me. You're killing me Man Jesus has just twisted the good guys and the bad guys. I'm so confused parables are so hard. They're not So if if servant number one is to be the good guy, why am I so upset with him?

Why am I so irritated by his behavior and his heart? And I'll tell you why Why? Because there is a massive gap between what he received and then what in turn he gave That's why you're upset with him Because there's a gap between what he received and then what he gave See servant number two here could have paid off It's a small debt that he owed and he and he wanted to pay it off. It's just a just 100 silver coins And he refused he refused Servant number one experienced astonishing forgiveness life changing forgiveness But yet in turn he continued to be a harsh man It'd be like the Christmas carol and Scrooge just continues to be Scrooge

Nothing changed This man has the worst case of of short-term thankfulness ever Parents this is what drives us nuts with our kids We do something kind for them. We You know we We take them out to Sherry's Like I did with my two of my children that are young And we had amazing food. It was it was it was it was wonderful Right I mean Sam was like mom. Has she ever been to Sherry's? This is so good And then Caleb responds, you know pastor Scott got married at Sherry's And I'm like well, that's not exactly the story We had a we had a great meal and then it's like oh and they

had and and then we get home and then you know and then you know they Kind of were bickering and it's just like as it drives us nuts He just had you were just blessed We just took you to Disneyland. We just had Christmas. We open gifts It drives us nuts You know people who have received grace and yet live with a harsh spirit towards others. It's just ugly And truly it is a stench in the church You want to be a good member of fourth you have to believe the gospel for yourself first You have to be touched by the grace of God And revel in it and remember it and Jesus knew this so he said do communion often So that you don't forget the story so that you don't forget that it's true so that you can behave rightly towards one another Are we as a people unmerciful? Are we harsh? Do we withhold forgiveness? when wronged And here this church people they notice They notice In fact we see it in the parable look at verse 31 When his fellow servants saw what he had what had taken place They were greatly distressed And they went and reported to their master all That had taken place So it's interesting that These fellow servants turn in their companion to the king even though his actions were justified Maybe not the choking piece but the rest of it They found his behavior reprehensible in light of the kindness that was afforded to him Folks people notice

[35 : 12] And they know Whether we are harsh Unforgiving or whether we are merciful and kind I think a lot of you are probably here at fourth because you know you have a merciful pastor And you're like I have a pastor, you know, that's a secret about fourth you come to fourth. You're gonna have a pastor Some of you will get that at some point I know that even in my own fall from grace There were individuals that were very hard on me and they were very harsh and And yet I had pastors in my life that were very merciful and kind people notice They notice in in the big ways they notice in the small ways of how we interact with with others We had a strange car repair scenario a little bit ago where we had our car in the shop and I forget what was being repaired and then I get a call from the mechanic. He's like you're not going to believe this

Okay, I'm bracing myself we We dropped another car on your car Like the hitch of a car wrecked the hood of your car I mean who expects that?

Like you I'm gonna take my car to the mechanic so it can be worse when I pick it up And I just I mean I was like I've never That's a new one I mean I was sort of Amused a little bit. I just but I just said, you know, um He's like, yeah, we're gonna fix. I'm like, thank I just said thank you and I just thank you for having integrity And then it was just kind of silent And the mechanic was I think just befuddled like Okay, then I'm like, okay, then He he wasn't expecting mercy and he noticed it right it's the big ways. It's the small ways What is your reputation at work with your employees?

Those under your charge What's your spirit towards your spouse and husbands and wives? I know we can be we can be partial with one another at times And The enemy loves that he loves it And he wants to make you think that your spouse is the enemy and when you go there you've lost So confess sin and forgive sin and don't let bitterness fester Because what happens is it gets down there and then 10 years goes by and you're like, what's going on?

Why are we just a mess as a couple? Well, there's a seed down here and it just would never dealt with Has mercy found a home here at fourth And when I say mercy I'm not suggesting that we Take and Approach sin lightly You know in fact this parable shows up in a chapter. That's all about restoring a brother But when you discipline when you when you confront and when you forgive do it in a spirit of gentleness Paul says in Galatians 6 1 Well more important than how others See Our church How does God view a harsh spirited people?

[38 : 53] Let's finish up this parable verse 32 Then the master summoned him and said to him You wicked servant. I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt So also my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart Now I want to say something about parables here They're not equations. This is not systematic theology. They are Analogies to teach us to show us a piece of reality And so please don't read this parable and go oh works righteousness I've got to forgive to be forgiven, but

I think what you can gain from this is that if you don't forgive perhaps it's because you have never experienced Grace Grace personally for yourself And so there is a spirit in which this parable should provoke us to go. Oh Has grace touched my life?

Do I know the the astonishing forgiveness of Christ? But we see here the king's response and his response to this servant that he just forgave everything And then demanded his rights the king now

says you wicked servant There's absolutely no room to be harsh Based upon my prior actions with you I forgave you all all all that debt Because you pleaded with me Church mercy compassion forgiveness Is our kingdom ethic And it's not going to be experienced anywhere else on planet earth It's not going to be felt anywhere in this city other

Than within the body of Christ. This is a kingdom ethic. We are part of God's kingdom. It is a now not yet kingdom And we are to live in it as kingdom dwellers Representing the king He was compassionate were to be compassionate. That's what it means to be created in the image of God We're to imitate him be like him We're part of a very unique kingdom and it's so foreign to the place in which we live I was driving the other day I drive a lot It's what I do. I'm a driver I drive And I noticed a flatbed truck cut off this individual on

I-90 and This individual is not happy This individual then sped up their vehicle almost causing an accident to get Right beside this flatbed And then expressed to the flatbed driver Your number one That's code That's that's the world I'm probably gonna have to apologize for this. I know Scott but There was a man that was using a hedge by my office as a latrine and I knocked on the window and then he was like He got out of there and then I said, yeah Scott there was and he was Scott's like what I'm gonna go talk to him so Scott like you know and And then came back and like how'd it go Scott?

[43 : 31] Scott's like he told me I was number one That's the world That's the world But it's not who we are Church here is the application this morning and it's found in verse 33 And should not you Have had mercy on your fellow servant as I Had mercy on you or Paul says it in Ephesians 4 32 this way be kind to one another tender hearted Forgiving one another As God in Christ forgave you Church this is rocket fuel. This is ammunition to forgive This gives you the power Because what this parable declares is this

Every time you forgive another it will always always be less Than the forgiveness that God has granted to you It will always be less Than the forgiveness that God has granted to you Always and church that's power Because forgiveness real forgiveness when you have been deeply wounded injured is hard And I know people that have gone years harboring things Frisoned walking around with the yoke of unforgiveness on you and it is a horrible taskmaster The forgiveness you offer to others it will always be less Than the astonishing grace that God has afforded to you. That's the truth I'll end with this

Eric Metaxas writes In mid-May 1945 the allies marched into Holland To the unspeakable joy of the dutch people Despite the distractions of her work, Corrie Was still restless and she desperately missed her beloved betsy But now she remembered betsy's words That they must tell others what they had learned Thus began more than three decades of travel around the world As a tramp for the lord as Corrie Tenboom describes herself She told people her story Of God's forgiveness of sins And of the need for people to forgive those who had harmed them Corrie herself was put to the test in 1947 While speaking in a Munich church At the close of the service a balding man in a gray overcoat

Step forward to greet her And Corrie froze She knew this man well He'd been one of the most vicious guards at Ravensbrook One who had mocked the women prisoners as they showered It came back with a rush, she wrote The huge room with its harsh overhead lights The pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor The shame of walking naked past this man And now he was pushing his hand out to shake hers and saying A fine message for all line How good it is to know that as you see it How good it is to know that as you say All our sins are at the bottom of the sea And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness Fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand

He would not remember me of course How could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women But I remembered him And the leather crop swinging from his belt I was face to face with one of my captors and my blood seemed to freeze You mentioned Ravensbrook in your talk he was saying I was a guard there But since that time he went on I have become a Christian I know that God has forgiven me of the cruel things that I did there But I would like to hear it from your lips as well for all line And again the hand came out Will you forgive me And I stood there I whose sins had again and again Been forgiven and could not forgive Betsy had died in that place Could he erase her slow and terrible death simply for the asking?

[48 : 57] The soldier stood there expectantly waiting for Cory to shake his hand and She wrestled with the most difficult thing She says I had ever had to do for I had to do it. I knew that The message

that God forgives as a prior condition that we forgive those who have injured us Standing there before the former s s Man Cory remembered that forgiveness is an act of the will Not an emotion Jesus help me she prayed I can lift my hand. I can do that much but you have to supply the feeling Cory thrust out her hand And writes as I did an incredible thing took place The current started in my shoulder Race down my arm spraying into our joined hands And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being bringing tears to my eyes

I forgive you brother I cried with all my heart For a long moment we grasped each other's hands The former guard and the former prisoner I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then But even so I realized it was not my love I had tried and did not have the power. It was the power of the Holy Spirit It's astonishing And yet it is still less Father thank you Thank you that in our rebellion while we Well we would have been the ones perhaps to just cry out crucify crucify Lord you You went to the cross for us Lord thank you that this room Collectively we are We are a case of trophies of grace Lord none of us here Because we are somehow better Somehow needed your forgiveness just a little bit less Oh Lord we were spiritually dead We were in rebellion we were blind we could not see And yet you pursued us and you opened our eyes and you gave us life Lord Jesus we worship you We worship you Because You forgave us Lord we stand here not condemned We stand here as As liberated as free more than conquers Lord fill us with that joy today Father might mercy and grace find a home here at fourth Lord may it continue to grow Lord we pray that you would destroy Um the spirit of the enemy That he is harsh and destructive and unkind I pray lord that as we hold true To your word, but lord we would have a posture of of not only truth, but we have this posture of love That we would be merciful and lord i want to pray specifically for For our marriages for our homes Lord i pray that That as men Lord you know Me and i don't want to be on display this morning, but i can be harsh I can be harsh with my family would you continue to grow in me a merciful spirit

Because i am cognizant always reminded Of the great salvation you've afforded to me For it's in your name we pray Lord Jesus and all guys people said amen