

God's Expectation of Forgiveness

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[0 : 00] I invite you to please open your Bibles to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 18. It's found on page 19 in the New Testament section of your Pew Bibles.

I will spend our time looking at verses 28 to 35 in that chapter. I'm sure many of us have used the word miscommunication.

Sometimes we've heard that word used in the course of conversation, and especially in the context of conflict management. And usually this word is used when we want to indicate in a rather polite fashion that the other person was very unclear about what they said, and therefore are responsible for our not doing what they've asked us to do.

So it's a very polite way of saying, I am not sorry, because it's your problem. Or instead of saying, I am sorry, we use the word miscommunication to shirk responsibility.

But the fact also remains that there is genuine miscommunication. And David Trom, Piera Dillenburg of the University of Geneva in Switzerland, define miscommunication in this way.

[1 : 43] They define it as instances of action failure when the speaker fails to produce the intended effect and or misperception, that is, when the hearer cannot recognize what the speaker intended to communicate.

In other words, there is a lack of alignment, specifically one in which there is a divergence on the occurrence or results of communication.

Miscommunication is a case of action failure due to lack of understanding. And I think this is precisely what Jesus does not want on the matter of forgiveness.

He does not want any miscommunication between him and us on the matter of God's forgiveness of our sins and God's expectation of us to forgive one another.

And this is why in this parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus points our attention to three important truths about forgiveness.

[3 : 02] The first truth is God forgives us extravagantly. God forgives us extravagantly. In verses 23 to 27.

We notice that the first servant in this story, as we saw last Sunday, was forgiven an incalculable and unpayable debt.

He owed his master 10,000 talents. And of course, in the Greek, it is myrius, which basically infers the largest numerical term in the Greek language.

It is a vast, uncountable number. And the extent of this man's offense was incredible. And in a sense, it is symbolic of the extent of our own sin.

Your sin and my sin are beyond comprehension and humanly unpayable from God's perspective. It may look simple to us.

[4 : 08] It may feel like a minor misdemeanor. But from God's perspective and from eternal perspective, it is huge. And it is awful in the presence of God.

But of course, the miracle in this story is that the master releases him and forgives him of the debt. He wipes the slate clean, erases the book, and the man owes him nothing.

He is a forgiving man. And this is what God does for all of us when we come in penitent faith to Jesus Christ. God himself, in his mercy and in his grace, forgives us our sin, which is huge before him.

And we should not take God's forgiveness for granted because God's forgiveness cost him a lot. It was not cheap forgiveness at all.

It was not done by a wave of the hand. Your forgiveness from God, my forgiveness from God, cost God the death of his son, Jesus Christ.

[5 : 25] It was not a cheap and easy thing. It was huge sacrifice for God, huge sacrifice for Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

And so forgiveness does indeed cost. It cost God the blood of God. And it will cost you and I. And so this servant has been forgiven and his master expects him to forgive.

And that brings me to the second point in this sermon, which is the central focus of our message this morning. God, who has forgiven us extravagantly, expects us to forgive our fellow brothers and sisters extravagantly.

Now, as you look at this story, you discover that when this servant was forgiven, he left the presence of the king and went out.

And as he was going out, he ran into a fellow servant who owed him hundred denarii. And when he found him, he seized him by the throat and demanded that he pay him everything that he owed him.

[6 : 49] And of course, in verse 29, I want us to see that together, verse 29, so his fellow servant fell down and besought him, have patience with me and I will pay you.

And that's exactly what this other servant had said to the master. Look at verse 26. So, the servant fell on his knees imploring his master, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay you everything.

And his master had patience with him, forgave him and released him. And his fellow servant says almost exactly the same thing. But those words evoked no sympathy, no compassion, no forgiveness.

And with unbelievable callousness and insensitivity, the forgiving servant refuses to forgive and throws his fellow servant into jail.

And of course, it is a horrendous action because what the master forgave him is so much compared to the nothing that he could have forgiven his fellow servant.

[8 : 09] 10,000 talents compared to 100 denarii is big. 100 denarii is just a trifle. It is nothing in comparison.

Of course, he throws him into jail which is a very foolish and irrational action because in jail he could not even pay the debt. And of course, this is what happens when we refuse to forgive our brothers and sisters.

When we put our brothers and sisters into the jail of unforgiveness, it does them no good and does us no good. Neither the offender or the offended are in any better shape.

In fact, they are in worse shape if we refuse to forgive. And of course, it is also bizarre because this servant encountered his fellow servant in the public and brought their light and decided to humiliate him in the presence of everyone.

man. He had been forgiving so much and all that he could give to his fellow servant is public humiliation and unforgiveness.

[9 : 32] And of course, some of his other servants, fellow servants, saw what was happening and everybody started talking about it and finally they got the courage to go to the king, to the master and report what happened.

The Bible says they were distressed and shocked. You know, what is shocking in this story, what is distressing in this story is not that the servant would not forgive his fellow servant.

What is shocking here is that this is a servant who has been forgiving so much. He has experienced so much mercy. He has feasted at the banquet of God's forgiveness and yet he could not forgive his fellow servant for so little.

A man who has been forgiving so much could not forgive so little. And that is a tragedy in this story. And that is a tragedy in real life. It is tragic when we as believers are unwilling to forgive one another. We who have been graciously and totally and permanently forgiven by God for our sins that are immeasurable.

[10 : 55] It is tragic when we refuse to forgive our brothers and sisters for little things that they've done to us. Paul writing to the Christians in Ephesus says to them be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving each other just as God in Christ has also forgiven you.

How has God in Christ forgiven us? He has forgiven us everything. He has forgiven us so much and it cost him his blood to do that.

And so God expects us to forgive and there is absolutely nothing anyone can do to us that can be compared to what we have done to God.

And if God has forgiven us so much we must be willing to forgive so little even though it looks so big to us. What then does it mean to forgive?

I want you to glance down to verse 35 in that chapter. So also my heavenly father we do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

[12 : 19] Genuine forgiveness is forgiveness that comes from your heart. And when it comes from your heart it is full it is complete it is total it is without any reservations.

It is seeing the other person as if they had never sinned against you. It is dealing graciously with the offender and we no longer hold the offense over them or even in our minds.

It means to choose not to dwell on what they have done it means to choose not to hold a grudge against the person. It is to be willing not to punish and be vengeful.

It is giving up our right to bitterness and revenge. It is saying to them I forgive you and I release you and I love you.

And of course it is not easy to do this. It is not easy to let go. And this is why we need the grace and the power of God. We need to go to God in prayer asking him for grace to forgive.

[13 : 40] But as we pray we need to remember that God has done so much for us. God will forgive. What if you refuse to forgive?

What if after remembering all that God has done for you and after praying and after other people have encouraged you to forgive and you still refuse to forgive?

And this brings me to my third point in this passage. If we do not forgive, God will chasten us. When we refuse to forgive, after we've been forgiven so much, God will discipline us.

I want us to look at verse 32. Then his Lord summoned him and said to him, You wicked servant, I forgive you all that debt because you besought me.

And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you? And in anger his Lord delivered him to the jailers till he should pay all his debt.

[14 : 54] In anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he will pay all his debt. And I want us to read verse 35 together.

So also my heavenly father, we do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. See what Jesus is saying?

If you and I refuse to forgive our brothers and sisters from our heart, what happened to this man, is what the heavenly father, the gracious heavenly father, will do to each one of you.

It couldn't be any plainer than that. This is the gracious God speaking, because unforgiveness is a sin. And sin is always a wicked thing before God, and arouses the anger of God, even if it is in the life of a believer.

And I think this is what we need to rediscover in our modern age, because we have become so terminally positive about the things of God and about the grace of God, that we forget that God is a God who disciplines his children if they remain with hardness of heart.

[16 : 24] God will discipline God's people by handing them over to the torturers, to the jailers. And of course, you and I know what it is, a real experience.

When there is unforgiveness in your heart, you remember the stress that comes into your life, the hardships and the disappointments and the problems, you remember how the torturers come with bitterness and frustration and malice that can actually cause ulcers and high blood pressure in your life.

It can cause all kinds of things. And the Bible says that sin can also cause unanswered prayer in your life. It is a very costly thing to do, to refuse to forgive.

It is when you refuse to forgive, the joy can disappear from your Christian life and you stop growing in your faith.

You see, what God is saying here is that he will not allow unforgiveness in his church. God will not allow unforgiveness in his church.

[17 : 41] He wants forgiveness because he is a forgiver. probably you are sitting down there wondering what if he does not repent?

Am I still supposed to forgive him? I am willing to forgive him and willing to forgive her if he crawls and begs and goes through all the hopes and then I consider about forgiving him and he must use the right language otherwise I won't forgive.

What if he doesn't? must you still forgive? The answer to that question is yes. You must forgive.

See in dealing with this question John Calvin differentiated between two kinds of forgiveness.

The first kind is where the person admits the wrong comes to you asking for forgiveness you grant the forgiveness and relationship is restored.

there is confession forgiveness reconciliation and healing that is the ideal. But you and I live in a fallen world where this is always not the case.

[18 : 58] Sometimes people who have wronged us or people we have wronged will not admit their guilt and our guilt and our sin no matter what happens.

sometimes they cover it up and begin to avoid us or keep on hurting us on purpose. John Calvin says how can you forgive in a situation like that?

And it's worse in the context of the family. He's done it over and over again. How can you forgive? And he introduces us to the second kind of forgiveness.

He said in that situation you must forgive in the sense that you let go of your anger, your bitterness, your desire for revenge and malice.

You must let go of it. And of course the relationship remains broken and may never be healed.

There may never be reconciliation until there is repentance.

[20 : 04] But forgiveness is always possible. even where reconciliation isn't. And so you and I must forgive whether there is repentance or not and we must leave it in the hands of God to deal with it.

As I finish this morning I know that we live in a very fast world in a tit-for-tat world where we have to get even.

And what I'm saying to you this morning brothers and sisters is that God wants you to forgive. And you need to forgive. And so I want you to search your heart this morning.

Who is it that you have not forgiven? It may be a brother or a sister in Christ, a husband, a wife, your parents, your children, your colleagues, your pastor, or even the church.

I have met many people who are still angry with the church and angry with God. Who is it in your life that you still need to forgive?

[21 : 27] You may think they deserve not to be forgiven, but I need to say to you, you did not get what you deserved. You and I deserved punishment and wrath, but God has given us forgiveness and love and a banquet of mercy.

You did not get what you deserve. I did not get what I deserve. And they ought not to get what they deserve. That is not how the kingdom of God works. It is a kingdom of forgiveness.

For God does not want any miscommunication on this issue. He wants you to forgive. And what I want you to do today is this.

If there is anybody in this congregation or anybody in your life that you have not forgiven, I want you to look for them this afternoon.

If you can't find them, call them on the phone. If you don't know their phone number, go into the internet, type in their name and you'll find them. If they have an email, do something about it.

[22 : 40] That's what I'm asking for. Extend the forgiveness of God to them. Extend your forgiveness to them. That is what God wants us to do.

Forgiveness will restore broken relationships. it will restore broken families and broken hearts.

Forgiveness will bring unity to the church and renewal.

And I call you this morning to forgive. And may God grant you the grace to do that. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.