

Hope by Grace

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[0 : 0 0] well good morning everyone it's great to be with you again i encourage you to keep your bibles open at matthew 18 and also if you go to the st paul's app you'll find an outline for today's message as we kick off on our mission month right now a former american footballer with the miami dolphins was interviewed a number of years ago now by newsworld media asking him specifically one of the questions they asked him was what motivated him to go to university and to study university and eventually took him down the line of becoming a footballer he said and his answer was really interesting he says my father and my uncle were human cannonballs in the carnivals and my father said to me one day son either go to university or become a human cannonball and he said then one day while i was working out the decision which way to go he said my uncle was shot out of the cannon missed the net hit the ferris wheel and died he said at that point i decided to go to university now self-reflection in that moment seems a really good reason a good motive uh um there are motives however is one of those strange things to work out because often motives are mixed uh and even for the christian in fact probably and especially for the christian for instance what has motivated you this morning to tune into uh this service uh what motivates you as a christian to do uh spiritual disciplines why read your bible why pray what motivates you to give of your resources what motivates you to serve other people what motivates you to show mercy and as we launch out into this uh season of mission month and thinking about sharing the hope that we have in jesus the very first place you want to start is what is our motive to do such things and this is really really really important for us to wrestle with as we as christians and as a church as we seek to love the vulnerable and the needy of our community we love and the compassion the mercy of jesus christ what is the motive for us doing so so if you've got the st paul's app open right now you'll see i've got three points i want to go through the motive for sharing mercy uh receiving hope leads to sharing hope and awakening to a life of sharing hope so here it is in a nutshell our motive is in a nutshell before we launch into the rest of the today uh god impoverished his son jesus christ on a cross so that all of his riches and health and righteousness and life could be given to us those who trust in him that's it in a nutshell 2 corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 in the new testament reveals this mercy transaction so clearly it says god made him talking about jesus god made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him jesus we might become the righteousness of god a couple of chapters later in 2 corinthians uh it's stated in pure economic terms for you know the grace of our lord jesus christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich the foundational core element of the christian faith is that though poor all of humanity were being made rich through the mercy of god we were living in a rubbish tip we by and by his grace god has clothed us with kingly robes and made us to sit down at his

royal banquet table god's grace has a powerful impact in every part of your life his grace changes everything a person who knows that they have received mercy while an undeserving enemy of god will have a heart of love and mercy and compassion for the most ungrateful and the difficult and the unlovely of society this is in in absolute nutshell when a christian sees alcoholics prisoners prostitutes drug addicts homeless refugees the broker the destitute of society of society they know they're looking in a mirror it is irrelevant if that particular christian has spent their entire life as a respectable middle class person they look at the broken and they say in the depths of their hearts spiritually that's me i i i was that person even if physically and socially i've never been where they are right now they are in desperate need of mercy and i spiritually was in desperate need of god's mercy to me god gives mercy to the ungrateful and the wicked and that is what we were and the powerful effect of his mercy and his grace in us is that we become like the god of mercy and we show it to others so i want to unpack that that's in a nutshell i want to unpack that as we launch into matthew 18 if you've got that bible that parable in front of you helps us to show helps us see how a god's grace to us motivates a life of grace now just before this in matthew 18 the parable there jesus been talking about how to handle things when someone sins against you and so peter his apostle asks him a question lord how many times shall i forgive my brother and sister who sins against me he says and then he goes and answers his own question up to seven times now the attitude of the rabbis uh jewish rabbis at that time was that you would forgive your brother no more than three times you know three strikes and then you're out and so peter at this point is probably thinking well i'll go a bit further than that uh and you know jesus should be pretty happy with that that response but jesus gives a stunning response in verse 22 i tell you not seven times but 77 times now some commentators say that he he means literally 77 times others say well actually in fact he meant seven by 70 times he means 490 times the reality is either either alternative really misses the point of what jesus says because to try and calculate 77 or 590 is to go back to the pedantic calculation of forgiveness and mercy that jesus is rejecting at this point forgiveness and mercy is unlimited that's his point that is what god's grace towards us is it is unlimited and to make the point clear jesus then launches into this parable there's a man here's a character there's a man who owes a king 10 000 bags of gold it was a debt that according to verse 25 of matthew 18 was not able to be paid now that's an understatement the original language refers to a debt as 10 000 talents

now the talent was the highest unit of currency and 10 000 was the highest greek numeral so the idea here of this is that it's meant to convey the largest sum imaginable something what we might say it's just like squillions of dollars or something like that in fact the debt was a thousand times to get this in the this is first century palestine this particular debt was a thousand times the annual revenue of galilee judea samaria and idumea combined it's like taking all foreign debt globally and lumping on the responsibility of one human being to pay it back totally beyond imagination for those who first heard this impossible to pay this debt back and yet even though this particular character is bankrupt multiple multiple times over this particular servant still has a sense of pride he has not grasped the enormity of his bankruptcy have a look at what he says in verse 26 at this the servant fell on his knees before him be patient with me he begged and i will pay you back everything so he hadn't quite understood that there was no way he could pay it back no amount of time no amount of patience on behalf of the king would ever see this servant paying back this money he is utterly bankrupt he is powerless he is helpless no ability whatsoever to trade out of this situation you see if you go back to luke 10 the other passage was read to us law an expert of the law comes up to jesus and says so what does it mean to love my neighbor and the law expert in the parable of the good samaritan failed to grasp this concept as well he the law expert and both these men in this parable are the man on the road to jericho beaten helpless destitute couldn't do a thing to save themselves and both the law expert in luke 10 the two servants here all in the same position in need of mercy they are as what the rest of the new testament would say they are dead spiritually ephesians 2 says of all of humanity that we are dead in our transgressions and sins and as we know dead people don't cut deals they don't pay back loans and that is the bible's view of our state before god spiritually dead bankrupt multiple times over no amount of trading on our behalf will ever pay back what we owe god now of course the king here who in matthew 18 in this parable the king who represents god understood the plight of this servant more than the servant did have a look at verse 27 it says the servant's master took pity on him cancelled his debt let him go see this ultimately this story is about our god and the way that he graciously treats us

we who are bankrupt before god with a debt of sin that we could never be that could never be repaid by us have been forgiven a debt our sin against god has been piling up load of bad debt hour after hour day after day week after week month after month year after year our entire lives but god in his gracious action in the lord jesus christ has wiped it clean wiped it clean god has forgiven us a debt that we could never pay back and the words of this servant this first servant be patient with me and i'll pay you back everything is so pitifully untrue for us as well no amount of good activity not even good christian activity no amount of pulling up our socks and rolling up our sleeves trying a little harder will morally do it our debt against god is phenomenal we are bankrupt we don't have the ability the power to trade out of it and god and god comes along and god comes along in jesus christ and as 2 corinthians 5 says swap positions with us he's cancelled the debt he's taken our debt upon himself and he's given us his righteousness now i'm fully aware that there are people tuned in this morning for you right now this is the first time you've heard this can i encourage you to receive this god's gracious gift to you in the lord jesus and have your debt against god cancelled if you want to know a bit more about adrian's already been up here and talked about it we're doing an investigating christianity course in the coming weeks only a couple of weeks away jump onto that do not let this moment pass for you so what happens now you see having experienced hope receiving hope leads to sharing hope and that's the remarkable twist that comes in this story in matthew 18 when this servant who has been forgiven an incalculable debt goes out from that moment and just make sure that another servant of his who owes him a few dollars pays him back right down to the very last cent verse 28 have a look at it it's just ridiculous but when that servant went out he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins he grabbed him began to choke him pay back me what you owe he demanded and his fellow servant fell on his knees and he begged him be patient with me and i will pay you back but he refused instead he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay back the debt now it's just unthinkable the fact that the second servant's debt is one six hundred thousandth of the first debt emphasizes the ludicrous nature of the behavior of that first servant whose servant has been forgiven everything the point here is that any limitation on grace on forgiveness on mercy on compassion shows that this first servant shows is totally inconceivable the second servant pleaded for mercy he says to me be patient and i will pay you back which is exactly what the first servant asked the difference is this second servant could have but instead the first servant had him thrown into prison where he would not be able to work and he could not earn the money to pay the debt back and therefore it will never be cancelled the one who had been shown mercy refused to show mercy it is an unthinkable response to God's mercy to us in Jesus and yet that's the way a person talks whose Christianity is simply a group of ideas and it's not an experience of precious mercy of God in the Lord

[17:13] Jesus Christ it's a person whose Christianity is all truth no treasure all choices no cherishing all logic about Christ and no love for Christ all decision and no delight and we see it in Matthew 18 let's keep reading verse 32 then the master called the servant in this is the king calling in the first servant you wicked servant i cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as i had on you and in anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he should pay back all he owed and this is how my heavenly father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother and sister from your heart now Jesus purpose in telling this parable is to teach the principle of unconditional forgiveness forgiveness the ministry of mercy compassion grace has the exact same motivation and the exact same rationale the grace of God to us in the Lord

Jesus Christ the grace of God is dynamic and life changing God's grace his compassion his love his mercy his forgiveness motivates grace compassion love mercy forgiveness sharing hope in us the only true and enduring motivation for the Christian to love their neighbor that is all people is an experience and the grace and the mercy of God in Jesus if we know that we are sinners saved by grace alone we will be both open and generous to the outcast and the unlovely now let me just make a point here when secular people say that I don't need your Christian faith in order to practice moral behavior that is it's possible for me to love people regardless of your faith as a secular person they are right they don't need God to love someone in many ways in fact if you look at our society at the moment our society is more committed to things like social justice universal benevolence and human rights than any civilization has ever seen things like suffering death famine flood earthquakes pestilence war can waken up in our society wide movements of sympathy and practical solidarity in ways that have not been known before people but right actions don't always come from right motives and that's why we've got to constantly check our motives for instance right actions can come from the feeling of superiority to others it can pump up our fragile egos

I feel better about myself when I find people who are less fortunate than me this applies also to the religious person who believes that God will favour them because of their morality and their respectability they normally have contempt people like this religious people would normally have contempt for the outcast and the unlovely they think things like I've worked really hard to get where I am to get what I've got they can do the same that's the language of the moralist and the legalist another motivation to act in mercy is the opposite of the big brother superiority motive it is simple anger over injustice we can be moved with a burning indignation against racism and oppression and sexism and this inevitably requires us to demonise one group of people in order to help another group of people one neighbour has to become my enemy in order for another neighbour to experience my love and strangely these acts of benevolence and mercy are really powered by hatred and contempt for people certain groups of people what we need as

Christians is to be awakened to a life of sharing hope a Christian's motive for the alleviation of poverty inequality injustice suffering is the extension of the radical love that we have received from God which is unconditional and for all people it's the realisation that I am only where I am by the sheer and unmerited mercy of God in Jesus I am completely equal with every other human being that's the language of the person who has grasped and experienced the grace and the mercy of God in Jesus God God's love motivates our love by humbling us showing us that we are love sinners so that spending ourselves for others is not to be based on a sense of superiority but on having been shown our lack of it

Christians know that all things wrong will be put right by Jesus and it is a powerful incentive to love even our enemy that's what the secularist or the moralist or the legalist cannot do they cannot give their life for their enemies as Jesus has given his life for his so Christians not only have a deeper motivation to love their neighbor but also a much stronger hope when they do according to the Bible this world this it's in the end is going to be renewed the promise of the resurrection of Jesus is that we too will be raised with him with new and perfect bodies forever all injustice or suffering or disease and death is going to be wiped away for all of eternity Jesus and Isaiah and James and John and Paul use the ministry of mercy as a way to judge between true and false

[24 : 23] Christianity a sensitive social conscience conscience and a life poured out in the deeds of mercy to the needy is the inevitable sign of a person who has grasped the mercy of God deep in their heart heart for the poor and the needy lays dormant in every Christian until someone comes along and preaches on God's mercy in connection to the ministry of mercy and hope and compassion so if you like what it does is it pushes a button deep in the soul that begins the process of waking us up to a full grasp of God's grace and for it being outworked in our life so if this has not been convincing for you this morning let me try someone else who's done it I'll give you an example of this kind of preaching

Scottish minister Robert Murray Mishane preached this message to Scottish Christians in Scottish cities in 1838 let me just quote from it I fear that there are some Christians among you to whom Christ will not be able to say on the last day well done good and faithful servant referring to Matthew 25 your hardy dwelling rises amongst the thousands who are scarcely a fire to warn themselves at and have but little clothing to keep out the biting frost and yet you don't darken their door you heave aside perhaps at a distance but you do not visit them my friends I'm concerned for the poor but I'm actually more concerned for you

I don't know that Christ will say to you on that great day I don't know what he will say to you on that great day you say you follow Christ but you don't care for his poor I fear that there may be many hearing me who now know well that they may not even be Christians at all because they don't love to give now dear friends some of you pray night and day to be branches of the true vine you pray to be made all over in the image of Christ if so you must be like him in giving though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor some object to this my money is my own my answer Christ might well have said my blood is my own my life is my own another objects the poor are undeserving my answer

Christ might have said they are wicked rebels shall I lay down my life for these no he left the 99 and came after the lost he gave his blood for the undeserving yet another objects the poor might abuse it my answer Christ might have said the same yes with far greater truth Christ knew that thousands would trample upon his blood under their feet that they would despise it that they would make it an excuse for sinning more yet he gave his own blood oh my dear Christians if you would be like Christ give much give often give freely to the vile and the poor the thankless and the undeserving Christ is glorious and happy and so will you be it is not your money I want he says but your happiness remember his own words it is more blessed to give than to receive and so is the spirit of

God waking you up from a deep slumber the parable of the good Samaritan just a little bit that we read and the parable of the unmerciful servant which we just looked at are the pattern of God's mercy his mercy generates a life of sharing hope and mercy and so I invite you I urge you to lay aside any remnant of self goodness that you think that you might still have admit your total spiritual bankruptcy drink deeply of the infinite grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the mercy of God and then in deep awareness and appreciation for the hope that you now have that you've received live a life of sharing hope what that looks like is going to be unpacked for us more over the coming weeks including some of the projects that we're going to take on as practical steps forward but let me just close briefly on a note of thanksgiving I am grateful that we as a church have been increasingly moving in this direction becoming increasingly generous to others and just at the end of last year we put together a drought appeal to help

[29 : 59] Narrabri Anglican Parish going through difficult times because of the drought and as of Friday we're going to continue that drought appeal as of Friday I spoke to the vickery there at Narrabri and he was just so thankful for our partnership so let me just end with a note of gratitude and thankfulness as I read to you the note that he sent me Steve I want to thank you both for the conversation this morning and for the incredible generosity that St.

Paul's has extended towards God's mob at Narrabri Anglican Church we are preaching on Matthew 9 35 to 10 15 this weekend and the compassion and generosity that are mentioned there stand out in your care of us in Narrabri the region is looking marvellous at the moment but the hold of the drought remains firm and the pressures of COVID-19 are significant as you and we try to navigate our way through constant decisions and the limitations that this broken world is placing on us we are thankful for the tangible reminder of God's provision in your partnership please extend our thanks to God's mob that meets under your care and your leadership at St.

Paul's Chatswood let's continue in that ministry of grace and mercy to others in need bless il to y■i is