



2020 January Sermon Series: Storyline

Message #2: The Unforgiving Servant

Getting the Nod:

Opening Video: [Forgiveness Chalk Board](#)

There are certain things in life that are non-negotiables. You can't live without breathing... you can't drive without propulsion... you can't walk without gravity... you can't cook without some form of heat. Many things in life never become a reality without the non-negotiable in place.

The Bible is full of passages and stories that leave us with things that have changed the world... but they usually involve some non-negotiable. **For instance, last week Pastor Justin gave us an example of this truth:**

“We are just like sheep... and we need the Good Shepherd.”

We can quickly get lost and find ourselves in danger unless we have the Good Shepherd. We can't get to where we need to be without the Good Shepherd. **You see, this month we're going to the scripture to find stories that literally changed the world.** And in every one of those stories we will find non-negotiables... the things that must be there to change us... and change the world.

Today's story is found in Matthew 18... starting at verse 21. It's the story of a king and his servant. And the non-negotiable in this Bible Story is **FORGIVENESS. Yes, forgiveness changes the world!**

Humor with two brothers and forgiveness: Two little brothers, Harry and James, had finished supper and were playing until bedtime. Somehow, Harry hit James with a stick, and tears and bitter words followed. Charges and accusations were still being exchanged as their mother prepared them for bed. She said, “Now boys, what would happen if either of you died tonight and you never had the opportunity again for forgive one another?” James spoke up, “Well, OK, I'll forgive him tonight, but if we're both alive in the morning, he'd better look out.” **That is not the kind of forgiveness the Bible is talking about.**

Transitional Statement: Let's look at this story in Matthew 18...

Connecting Us:

NLT | Mt 18:21-35 Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” 22 “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven! 23 “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. 24 In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. 25 He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. 26 “But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ 27 Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. 28 “But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. 29 “His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. 30 But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. 31 “When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset.

They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. 32 Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. 35 "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT DEBT AND MERCY. Money and payback. Forgiveness and unforgiveness.

You know, money seems to always be a stumbling block to people. Even the Bible reminds us that "...the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil..." (1 Timothy 6:10). And money played a large role in the servant's life. It was fear in what he owed the king; and it was anger in what someone else owed him!

But before we get into this story and how it changes the world and how it changes us... let me give you a quick outline on "**Four Ways to Know When Money Isn't Destroying You**":

You know money isn't destroying you...

- 1. When what you have doesn't have you.**
- 2. When what you don't have doesn't bother you.**
- 3. When people are more valuable to you than money itself.**
- 4. When you can celebrate with those who have been blessed by God with it.**

Transitional Statement: Now, having learned these things... let's get back to our story of the unforgiving servant...

God's Word on Forgiveness:

Let's look at the characters in this story:

- **Peter.** He approaches Jesus with a question on his view of forgiveness. Peter was not without warrant for this suggestion. It was Rabbinic teaching that a person must forgive another three times. That is established in the first two chapters of the Old Testament book Amos. Peter thought that he was going very far, for he takes the Rabbinic three times, multiplies it by two, for good measure adds one, and suggests, with eager self-satisfaction, that it will be enough if he forgives seven times. Peter expected to be warmly commended; but Jesus' answer was that the Christian must forgive seventy times seven. In other words, there is no reckonable limit to forgiveness.
- **Jesus.** He takes Peter's expectations of forgiveness 7 times and multiplies it to 70 times seven. Jesus then told the story of the servant forgiven a great debt who went out and dealt mercilessly with a fellow servant who owed him a debt that was an infinitesimal fraction of what he himself had owed.
- **A kind king in the parable.** Wanting to settle his accounts with his servants. Payment is due. He was a king of justice and forgiveness. He started to sell the servant and all that he had, but the king had compassion on him and released the servant and wrote off the debt.
- **A servant.** He owed the king 10,000 talents... equaling millions. Not having the money, the king commanded that the servant be sold with his family and all their possessions. The servant

begs the king to give him more time to pay. The king forgave his debt and set him free.

- **A fellow servant who owed the first servant.** The fellow servant owed a few thousand dollars to the already forgiven servant. But instead of offering forgiveness and release like he had received, he had him arrested until he could pay him back.
- **Other watching servants.** Servants who knew of the king's act of kindness and forgiveness... and also saw the harsh reaction of the other servant being arrested... these servants went to the king and told him of the harsh action.
- **The now angry king in the story.** He called the forgiven servant evil, reminded him of the kind forgiveness extended, he challenged the servants' motives, then sent him to prison to be tortured until the day he can pay him back.

Jesus' moral of the story. We are the servants and the Father is the king. All of us owe a debt that must be paid... and only the King can forgive that debt, because the debt is impossible to pay. And the King won't forgive our debt if we won't forgive those who owe us with a true heart. **Here are the points of our non-negotiable...**

The Universal Story of Our Debt and His Mercy:

1. Our debt is unmatched.

- **We must forgive in order to be forgiven.** The first servant owed his master 10,000 talents—and a talent was the equivalent of fifteen years' wages. That is an incredible debt.
- The debt which a fellow servant owed him was a trifling thing; it was 100 denarii, and a denarius was the usual day's wage for a working man. It was therefore a mere fraction of his own debt.
- **Illustration of the contrast in debts:** Suppose both debts were paid in small coins. The 100-denarii debt could be carried in one pocket. The 10,000-talent debt would take an army of about 8,600 men to carry it, each carrying a sack of coins 60 lb. in weight; and the men would form a line that stretched five miles long!
- **Application:** The point is that nothing that others can do to us can in any way compare with what we have done to God in our sin; and if God has forgiven us the debt we owe to him, we must forgive our neighbors the debts they owe to us. **Let our sinful shame fan our forgiving flame of faith.**

2. His mercy is undeserving.

- NLT | Col 2:13-14 **You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.**
- **Application:** Getting to heaven takes forgiveness. It's the non-negotiable. And the forgiveness in this story is intended to be a two-way street. God extends to us free and total forgiveness... and the only thing we are to do in response to that mercy is to offer it to others who have wronged us. **Let His forgiveness fuel our witness.**

3. Our debt is connected to a murder.

- We have been forgiven a debt which is beyond all paying—for human sin brought about the murder and death of God’s own Son—and if that is so, we must forgive others as God has forgiven us, or we can hope to find no mercy.
- **Application is found in NLT | Jas 2:13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.**
- **We have to let God’s justice be our compass.**

4. His mercy is found in the cross.

- **Illustrative Thought on forgiving our dogs:** HOW MANY TIMES WOULD YOU FORGIVE YOUR DOG? Think for a minute, how forgiving would you be as if your pet messed the carpet several times a day without a sign of changing? I think eventually you’d give up on your pets and take them out into the wilderness and set them free, you know what I mean - dump them.
- **Application: God’s love and forgiveness is astounding** – he gets hurt every time we mess up or sin, but he keeps on loving us. **Take one look at the cross and remember the cost Christ paid.**
- God’s love is unconditional – like no other love. God’s love is never ending, and it doesn’t run out if we keep messing up, which is lucky because we all keep messing up several times each day. **Let the cross be our daily destination!**

Transitional Statement: So, how can forgiveness change us and change our world today?

Our Response to God’s Word:

How mercy changes our lives?

1. **The key to getting to heaven is forgiveness. Let it flow.**
 - NKJV | Mt 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
2. **Every successful family will practice mercy. Let it grow.**
 - NLT / Matthew 18:22 “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!”
3. **The fruit of the enemy is unforgiveness. Let it go.**
 - NLT | 2 Co 2:10-11 When you forgive this man, I forgive him, too. And when I forgive whatever needs to be forgiven, I do so with Christ’s authority for your benefit, 11 so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes.
4. **Fallen believers need mercy to get back home. Let them know.**
 - NLT | 2 Co 10:3-4 We are human, but we don’t wage war as humans do. 4 We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. **Forgiveness is God’s weapon!!**
5. **The King’s mercy can change the brokenness of the world. Let it show.**

Transition: There’s a story about forgiveness connected to the Pope and what the world thinks...

Drawing the Net:

Illustration “Why Forgive”: Almost three decades ago (1981) there was an attempt on the life of Pope John Paul. Fortunately, the Pope lived. After he recovered, he shocked the world when he made a visit to Rome’s Rabbibia Prison to see the man who had attempted to assassinate him on Christmas day. Millions watched on television as the Pope visited with Mehmet Ali Agca, who only two years before had tried to assassinate him.

The white-robed Pope and terrorist huddled in the dark prison cell for 20 minutes, talking in low voices that could not be heard. When he emerged John Paul explained, **"I spoke to a brother whom I have pardoned."**

The Irony of the Media: I will never forget the headline the next week in Time Magazine, "Why forgive?" We know why. (SOURCE: Adapted from Dr. Randall H. Perry, Sermon: Who Me? Forgive Who?. Illustrations for Sept 15, 2002, www.e-sermons.com.)

The Pastoral Prayer of Challenge

(Make the congregation aware of the altar time being both now and after the service)

Things to pray about:

- Our debt is unmatched, and His Mercy is undeserving.
- Our debt is connected to the death of Jesus; His mercy is seen in the cross.

- Ways to apply this message:
 - Save the ones asking for forgiveness.
 - Help us to practice forgiveness at home and in our relationships.
 - Help us to know where unforgiveness comes from.
 - Help the backslidden and prodigal souls come home by mercy.
 - Change our broken world by them seeing the mercy of Jesus.