

The Forgiven Forgive

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It's good to see each and every one of you guys here. It's always a pleasure to be able to preach to you God's Word. As many of you guys know, I'm in the same preaching course actually that our brother Charlie's in, and that's why we get to preach for you guys and get the opportunity. If you notice, my wife Christine, she's going to be recording me, so I have to watch this recording and have a physical reaction, cringing.

I'm writing an evaluation of my own preaching. But I love you guys, and I love this church. It's an honor. I consider it an honor and a privilege to be able to preach from this pulpit.

Our text today comes from Matthew 18, verses 21 to 35. It's on the parable of the unforgiving servant. Out of the options of the texts that we could preach for our class, I chose this text because of its reminder of its countercultural message to forgive.

We as a culture, we don't celebrate forgiveness. We celebrate getting one's due. When a protagonist in the movie, he's mistreated, marginalized, forgotten.

The movie doesn't conclude with him forgiving. I don't know. We wouldn't like that. We want to see him grind. We want to see him go through his training montages, and we want to see him get his victory, get his revenge.

[1 : 29] Nowadays, if you don't like something that someone has done to you, we cancel them. We label them as toxic, and we remove them as far as we can from our lives.

But forgiveness is the one thing. The super glue that keeps all our relationships intact. It's the glue that keeps our friendships, our marriages, this own church together.

If we stop being a forgiving people, this church will stop, will cease to exist. That's how important this message of forgiveness is. So if you don't have a Bible, you'd like one, please just raise your hand, and one of our members would happily get you a copy.

For the rest of you, let's open up our Bibles to Matthew 18, 21 to 35. Let's bow our heads in prayer for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Well, holy God, I am your servant. You are our king. Pray that you would address us by your word, your infallible and inspired word.

[2 : 38] As we remember that the inspiration comes not from us, not from my own intellect or my own lips, but it comes from your word. I pray that we would understand and apply the words that you have for us today that we could be a forgiving church, a counter-cultural, radically forgiving church, and that the world will know us by our love.

We cannot forgive as you have called us to forgive unless you help us, unless you supply the love that we need to forgive. Pray you would meet us.

Holy Spirit, draw us close to you. Speak to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand, if you are able, for the reading of God's infallible word.

Starting from verse 21. 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.

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

[4 : 04] 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 a servant fell on his knees imploring him, have patience with me and I will pay you everything. And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him just a hundred denarii, a hundred denarii. And seizing him, he began to choke him saying, pay what you owe.

So his 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.

When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed. And they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. And his master summoned him and said to him, you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

[5 : 29] And should you not 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. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

You may be seated. In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom recounts her ministry during World War II of sheltering and hiding Jews after Nazi Germany invaded her home country of the Netherlands.

But on the last day of February 1944, a Dutch informant essentially ratted her out. So the entire Ten Boom family was forced to go to concentration camps.

And there, her father would quickly die. Then Corrie and her sister Betsy, they were sent to Ravensbruck, which was a woman's labor's camp in Germany.

[6 : 40] And slowly but surely, after the suffering that they experienced, her sister Betsy would also die there as well. But God spared Corrie due to a clerical error, essentially just a miracle.

He, she was released from the camp when just one week later, all the women in her age group, they were sent to the gas chambers to their death. And God used her.

Years later after the war at a church service in Munich, she was sharing the gospel of Christ when she saw that man, that one man.

She knew him instantly. He used to be a Nazi guard at Ravensbruck. He was part of the people that killed and tortured my friends and family.

And as the church was emptying, he would go up to Corrie, beaming, thrusting out his hand, saying, how grateful I am for your message, Frowlin.

[7 : 52] To think that as you say, he has washed away my sins. Can you forgive me? Any one of us could imagine what she would feel.

She wasn't exactly happy that this man was in front of him sticking out his hand asking for her forgiveness. Instead, angry, vengeful thoughts began to flood her mind, remembering this man's horrific sin.

I'll read what Corrie said about this encounter. I tried to smile. I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity.

So I breathed a silent prayer, Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness. this. As I took his hand, the most incredible thing happened.

Both Corrie and I are amazed of what happened. From her shoulder along her arm, through her hand, the current seemed to pass along.

[9 : 10] Into her heart sprang up a well of love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed her. just holding his hand for several moments and her eyes filled with tears, she proclaimed, I forgive you, brother, with all my heart.

This is an amazing testimony of powerful forgiveness, but Corrie and I, we both don't share this story to be in awe of her or her faith. The source that Corrie tapped into wasn't the endless reservoir of her own love, but it was God's.

See, the fulcrum that the world's healing turns upon is not our own innate goodness, but it's Jesus' radical forgiveness for us.

And that's why we can ultimately obey the main point of our passage, that we are to forgive without limit, without limit, ultimately because God has forgiven us that much more.

And in this, he promises to give us the love that we need to be able to love our enemies, to love our offenders. So in this sermon, we're going to talk about the command of forgiveness, the conviction that you need to be able to forgive in this way, and the consequences of forgiveness.

[10 : 31] In other words, we're called to forgive without limit, forgive because we have been forgiven so much more, and forgive because of the consequences. our passage opens with disciple

Peter coming to Jesus and asking him how frequently must he forgive his fellow brother who sinned against him.

You see, it's really a natural question to what Jesus said earlier in the passage in verses 15 to 17. In that passage, Jesus teaches his disciples to confront the sin that they see in brothers and sisters, unrepentant sin.

And if they remain unrepentant, they must continue to escalate the issue and the stakes until they have to come to the decision where they remove that person, remove that unrepentant person from their midst altogether.

This is widely known for the instructions of church discipline and even excommunication. But if they repent, which is the whole entire purpose of church discipline is to get them to repent, they have gained their brother and sister back.

So Peter naturally asks just then how many times do I have to forgive? How many times do I have to go through this cycle? How many times must I decide to live with the painful consequences of someone else's sin and not hold it against them?

[12:01] You see, Peter's question is one that many, many of us have asked before. Let me ask you a series of diagnostic questions to see if your limit of forgiveness, your patience has ever been tested.

Number one, number one, are you a driver? Are you a driver in Boston specifically? That'll test your patience. Number two, do you have roommates?

You guys are roommates, I know some of you guys are roommates in here, don't look at each other here. number three, do you have parents? Do you have siblings? Family relationships can get really messy.

Number four, this is a big one, are you married? So that last question, Ruth Graham, wife to famous evangelist Billy Graham, has widely stated one time, the happy union, the happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers.

Unless you think that they had a perfect marriage, because after all it's Billy and Ruth Graham, during an interview she was asked if she had ever contemplated divorcing Billy.

[13:16] And to that she quit back, divorce? No. Murder? Yes. But the reality is whether you're married or not, the bottom line is if you're in a relationship with any other fellow human being, any other sinner, you will experience the need to forgive and to ask for forgiveness and to go through that cycle again and again and again.

Every one of us has experienced the frustration of, just why is this person like this? Why would he say something like this? Why can't she be more understanding?

Why doesn't he ever learn how many times do I have to forgive? So Peter, the faithful student, he takes a stab at that question. He asks, seven times, Lord?

His instincts are really in the right place because he's being quite generous according to the Jewish standard at that time. They were taught to forgive up to three times. Essentially it's a three strikes and you're out rule.

And so with that instinct, he more than doubles that limitation hoping that he'd get a blessed are you, Simon bar Jonah, not a get behind me, Satan.

[14:39] But what Jesus says in response, it's quite astonishing. If you think about it, if you sit with it, it's astonishing. He says, I do not say to you seven times. That phrase indicates he's rewriting what the Jewish teachings of that time are.

I do not say to you seven times, but 77 times. You guys all know that he's not being literal here. It's not that you're just waiting until the 77th time.

No, it's that if you're counting at all, you've got it wrong. If you are keeping a record of wrongs, you've got it wrong. Jesus wants us all to forgive without limit.

Without keeping a record of wrongs, this is a radical, far-reaching, community- transforming call to forgive. If you sit with that and you think about it, you might start to have some questions about that radical call.

You might ask, surely this doesn't mean to forgive ceaselessly. What if my offender isn't even repentant? What if he's not even sorry about that?

[15:57] And in this fallen world, I know that this applies to some of you whose lives have been tragically torn apart about people who don't even seem to care. And so I think it's important to clarify that forgiveness is not the same thing as reconciliation.

We have to make that distinction. Forgiveness is the basis of reconciliation, but that does not mean that they are one and the same thing. Forgiveness, again, is the loving disposition toward an enemy, toward an offender, and rejecting, taking vengeance into your own hands.

But complete reconciliation requires three things. It requires the offender's repentance.

Repentance, it requires a change pattern of living, and it requires a rebuilding of trust.

Only then a relationship can be built back to what it once was. Forgiveness does not allow unrepentant abusers to continue to go on abusing.

We're not called to reconcile every broken relationship because sometimes those things are just simply out of our hands. But nonetheless, the command is that we are always required to forgive from our hearts.

[17:17] We must always be ready to be able to transact that forgiveness once that time comes that is appropriate. Because Jesus still calls us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute you.

And theologically, it's not because we first repented that Jesus saved us. No, we were dead in our sins. God is the one who spoke life into these dry bones and led us to repentance.

We didn't even know that we needed to repent. But nonetheless, he extended his mercy in such an incredible way. And in the same way, we are called to love and forgive our offenders even when they don't ask for forgiveness.

forgiveness. But you might continue to object. It's not just to continue to forgive this way, right?

Some people need to face justice.

Again, I say it's important to define forgiveness carefully. Forgiving is the rejection of taking personal vengeance or payback into your own hands.

[18:24] Forgiving is not forgetting. In other words, forgiveness looks like not being the judge, the jury, and the executioner of our offender, but forgiving instead trusts God and sometimes trusting his appointed governing system to uphold and carry out institutional justice.

But still, Jesus calls us to love our enemy, to want the very best for them, to want heaven for them. Because our unbelievably gracious God wants the same thing for them. That's why Rachel Den Hollander, the first woman to speak up against sexual assaulter Larry Nassar, the disgraced former team doctor of the U.S.

Women's National Gymnastics Team. She said this in her viral testimony against him at his criminal trial. I pray you experience the soul-crushing weight of guilt so that you may someday experience true repentance and true forgiveness from God, which you need far more than forgiveness from me. Although I extend that to you as well. In that testimony, she offers both forgiveness and calls the judge to uphold justice.

[19:53] She even calls for the highest level of institutional punishment for Nassar. You see, those things need not to be mutually exclusive. Sometimes forgiving is loving our enemy by helping that person see the soul-crushing weight of guilt, as she says, through the cold water wake-up call of justice.

And so we must obey Jesus' command to forgive endlessly and countlessly. Even if they don't repent. Even if they need to face institutional justice.

But again, if you compare the context of this earlier passage, the context we're talking about is it's a repentant Christian brother. So then how much more should you forgive ceaselessly?

So forgive your fellow Christian whom you won after confronting his or her sin. Forgive even if it costs you time, blood, tears, sleep, money.

Forgive in your heart. Even the person that you excommunicated from your church and is repentant. Are you ready to do that? And if that same brother sins against you again, maybe in the same exact way, and he repents, forgive.

[21:16] Forgive. And then he sins against you again and repents, forgive.

And when he sins against you again and repents, what do you think Jesus' answer will be? Yes, forgive again. And that forgiveness should naturally follow its way outside the church too.

You must forgive the person who's cut you in line and cut open your heart and forgive everyone in between. Forgive your parents, your siblings, your spouse, your boss, your roommate.

Forgive your previous church. Forgive your pastor. Forgive insults, stealing, gossiping, backbiting, betrayal, and selfishness. Forgive without limit.

Forgive even if it hurts. So with one final objection, you might plea, this is impossible. I can't do this.

[22 : 23] This is so hard. You're right. It is impossible for you. This kind of forgiveness is nothing short of a miracle. But with God, all things are possible.

It all begins with his love. And that's why we can forgive limitlessly. Because we were forgiven limitlessly. We need to have that conviction if we are to ever forgive in this way.

So to prove this point, Jesus launches into his parable of the unforgiving servant. He compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who wished to settle his accounts with his servants.

And we meet this one servant in particular. And we found out that he has an astronomical, almost an incalculable debt of 10,000 talents to the king.

And to put that into terms that you might better understand, a talent was originally a weight of 30 kigs of metal. So it's typically silver. And a common laborer at that time would expect to make around two talents over the course of his entire life.

[23 : 37] If you do the math, simple math, you would have to work 5,000 lifetimes to be able to pay this debt back off. And if you want to look at the sheer dollar amount of silver, it's roughly about a quarter of a billion dollars.

For a lowly servant, that is a shocking amount of debt. How does that even happen? How bad with your money do you have to be? And back then, there was no filing for bankruptcy.

There's no lowering of your credit score. There's no limited access to new loans. No, no. In those days, you lost everything. You lost all your possessions. And on top of that, you were thrown to prison, a cold, miserable prison, until you could pay all your debt back.

And for this man, because of the sheer debt that he owed, this is essentially equivalent to a lifetime sentence. No, more accurately, this is a 5,000 lifetimes sentence.

And on top of that, verse 25 says that the rest of his family would be thrown into prison. A man, he's called to be the provider, the protector of his family.

[24 : 50] He's to make sure that his family is provided for physically, spiritually, and financially. He's supposed to be the rock of his family. But instead, you're looking at a man who made a complete failure of his life.

He is a complete wreck. He's a complete failure as a husband, as a father, and as a servant. And before we keep going and point and mock, don't forget that the point of this parable is that Jesus is actually talking about us.

Every one of us, each one of us, is this lowly servant with an insurmountable debt to the great king. Now, you might push back, but really?

Is this me? You know, I don't think I've made a wreck in my life. I have a steady job. You know, good family. I've got a two-bed, two-bath in Cambridge.

Keep my nose clean. Keep out of trouble. I'm really not that bad compared to other people in this life. But the things are pretty good for me. And if you're like this, this is you, you're missing the fact that Jesus is using an analogy of extreme financial debt to convey your extreme spiritual debt before a most holy God.

[26 : 11] It's been said that the heinousness of sin lies not so much in the nature of sin committed, but as in the greatness of the person sinned against. In school, I had a frustrating experience witnessing a undergrad, a freshman who spent a mere month studying this one subject, wrongly claim in lecture that he knew better than the professor who spent decades upon decades spilling her blood, sweat, tears, trying to study the subject.

And he was completely wrong. But he still kept on claiming that he knew better. That pales in comparison to what we do with our God.

The creator God, infinite in wisdom, infinite in power and perspective. He said, follow me in my ways, and you will find life and life abundant. But to that, we said, nah.

Yeah, my ways, I think my ways are in fact higher than your ways. My thoughts are higher than your thoughts. I can create my own happiness.

I can create my own destiny. I have my own meaning. Thank you very much. And you know what this is called? This is called sin. And scripture teaches that just one of them merits eternal damnation.

[27 : 33] And it's not like that one good deed can cancel out one bad deed. That's not how this works. The only way out is that the almighty judge just might spare you.

Maybe you do acknowledge some spiritual debt to the king. But you underestimate the severity that you owe. The debt that you owe.

You operate as if you owe God \$10,000. Maybe even \$20,000. But not hundreds of millions. And with enough elbow grease and grit, you think you could pay it back and get even with God. When you operate like that, you know what you can become? You become like this tiny little boat. Tossed by the whims of the seas. You get high.

You get elevated. When you feel like you're doing well. When you, you know, I'm reading my Bible a lot. And doing a lot of good things. I'm paying back my debt. But then the next day you come crashing back down.

[28 : 41] When you mess up. When you do that thing that you said you wouldn't do again. Always tossed by the waves of the seas. Going up.

Coming down. Never stable. Never secure. This is the definition. The quintessential definition of the instability that works righteousness gets you in your life. No, the debt is far worse than you can imagine.

We've all made a wreck of our lives. And had a debt that we can never hope to pay. And when we see how incredible this debt is.

We see that there's no way out of it. The only right response is to repent before the king. And to beg him for free mercy. But in my heart.

What I see in others' hearts lately. I don't see repentance. I see whitewashing. Oh, you know, that's not that bad.

[29 : 39] I see self-pity. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. For what it cost me. I'm sorry for getting caught. I see blame shifting.

Oh, it's not my fault. It's her fault. It's his fault. I see self-flagellation. I'm going to whip myself. I'm going to feel so bad. So I make up for it. And as we see in this parable.

I see a promise to repay. That last one is the servant. What's the servant? Tries to pull off. When he comes before the king. He falls on his knees and implores him. Have patience with me.

And I will pay you everything. Everything he claims. If you think about it. This is an incredibly audacious claim. For a lowly servant. Whose financial record is in the net negative.

For 5,000x times. What he could ever hope to make in his entire life. Whether he's making just excuses. Or he's that bold.

[30 : 37] Or maybe he's just that bad at math. This is not repentance here. Friends, I think that this is one of the hardest things. Maybe the hardest thing to do in Christianity.

Is to accept free grace. To humble yourself. And to declare that I can never pay back the debt that I owe. To believe that I made a wreck of my life.

And the only source. The only solution. Is not internal. Not if I dig down deep enough. But it's external. Outside of me. I need not my own righteousness.

But I need a foreign. I need an alien. An external righteousness. To cover my sins. You see, that's why the gospel is so offensive. It says that we are more sinful than we'd like to believe.

Because the only way out is by free grace. I find it ironic that we love free stuff. I love free stuff. I'd be the first to admit it. But I'd also be the first to admit that I don't want things to be that free.

[31 : 44] You know? I don't want your charity. I don't want your pity. I can do it myself. I got it. But that's the message of the gospel.

We're chosen not because of any particular aspect about us. Really, God? You didn't choose me because of what I could do for you? Because of my intellect? Because of my skill set?

My resume? My good looks? My humor? My money? No. No. God did not choose us because of anything about us. He chose us in spite of us.

If people saw a film of your life, all your thoughts and all your deeds, you know what people would say about you, about God? They would say, wow, God could love someone like him, like her?

He would die for her? If you're offended by some of the things that you've heard in your life, try, you were a wretched sinner, you were rebellious, foolish, blind, ignorant, lost, immoral, adulterous, nothing to offer God but your disobedience.

[32 : 55] I think some of the things that we've been offended by kind of pales in comparison to something like that. Knowing our spiritual condition, therefore, is the only way to deal with this debt, the only way to deal with this debt is by falling on our knees, falling on our faces, pleading with the master, not pretending, not pretending like we can pay back anything.

The master in this parable, he knows this too. Observe how he responds back to the servant in verse 27. Our text doesn't say, convinced he'd get his money back, the money, the master forgave

him.

No, this is, there's no, you scratch my back, I scratch yours. He doesn't think that this is a smart financial investment. No, he says, out of pity for him.

It's no sweeter words. The high and mighty king, by pitying this poor man, saved this man and his family, saves their life from a lifetime in prison.

See, the only thing that's more shocking in this parable than this incalculable debt that this lowly servant, I like how could he even possibly gain that much debt? The only thing more shocking is that the king, he could forgive it, just like that, free of charge.

[34 : 18] How rich must this king be in money and in mercy to let that kind of debt slide? Brothers and sisters, in Christ, the same is true of our heavenly king.

Our God is rich in mercy. His well, or his grace is a well so deep that we will never reach the bottom of.

You can dive over and over and over and you'll never reach the bottom. There is no limit to God's forgiveness if we simply just ask. You see, some of us operate as if our heavenly fathers, like our earthly fathers, that we're only just a few mistakes away from messing up this relationship and ruining it all.

No. Nehemiah 9 teaches us that God is ready. He is at the ready to forgive you. I love that word. He's ready.

He's gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He is ready to embrace you and to forgive you. He sits at the edge of his seat, ready to run towards his prodigal son or daughter who's come back home.

[35 : 29] He's never begrudgingly receiving you back with an attitude of, you try this again and you see what happens. No.

He removes our sin as far as the east is from the west. That means the distance between our sin and us is in an infinite space. He casts all our sins to the depths of the sea.

He operates as if we never sinned, just like the son. In the high priestly prayer in John 17, we read that the father loves us as he loves the son with the same kind of love.

That's mind-boggling. That's incredible. There's no limit of the forgiveness that he has for you. He loves you. He loves you.

He loves you. And see that love ultimately displayed at the cross of Christ because God is both perfectly forgiving and perfectly just.

[36 : 35] Because of that fact, someone had to pick up the tab even when we walk away scotch-free. And that someone is Jesus Christ who spilt his blood to pay for your endless debt.

See the expensive price it costs to atone for your sin. In the Old Testament, under Mosaic law, Israelites were commanded to sacrifice animals pure and spotless.

The best of the best. That blood, that animal, it was meant to hurt your wallet a little bit. How much more precious is the blood of the incarnate God?

Jesus, the exact embodiment of God, the most important, most powerful, most lovely human being in all the universe, in all history, who existed before time began, he spilt his precious blood for you in order to buy you.

That was the only payment sufficient to buy you. That's how deeply in debt that you were in. But then on the flip side, that's how precious you are to God that he would send his one and only son to die for you.

[37 : 54] Paul writes that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you, by his poverty, might become rich. So as a result of this unbelievable act of kindness, shouldn't the servant be transformed from the inside out?

Isn't that the natural response? Verse 28 says that instead he goes out and finds a fellow servant who owed him 100 denarii, which is 600,000 times less than what he had just been forgiven of. 600,000 times less. If you use the same numbers, this is roughly 400 bucks. Instead of showing the same forgiveness that he received, he violently seizes and he chokes him.

He chokes the dude. Demanding to pay back what he owes. Notice what the servant pleads with him then. He pleads the exact same thing, almost verbatim.

Except this time, it was very much plausible for this servant to pay him back 400 bucks compared to 10,000 talents. Instead of showing the same mercy that he had received, he throws him into jail until he should pay what he owe.

[39 : 12] Now this man, technically, he had every right to do this because the fellow servants owed him money. He had the individual right to send him to jail.

But compare that to the reaction of the bystanders. They witnessed this and felt deep in their bones that exercising his right was so wrong in light of the mercy that this man had received.

See that the equation is completely flipped upside down. He wants to equate for God's mercy, his forgiveness, his unbelievable love to us. Moreover, this parable uses a phrase, fellow servant. It uses it four times. I think it's meant to emphasize the parity, the equality between the servants and the disparity between the servants and the king.

But in station, and in power, and significance. What that means is that this fellow servant, he's just a servant like him. He's no better than him.

[40 : 19] If he received mercy from the high king, ought he forgive his equal? And likewise, if we received life-changing mercy from the master who reigns on high, how much more should we extend forgiveness to our fellow brothers and sisters whom we are no better than?

We are all equal to. So when you are offended, when you are hurt by someone else's sin, forgive, because you have been forgiven much more.

When it comes to you forgiving, you guys are all smart. I know that our church is smart. I want you guys to remember this number. Remember this ratio that Jesus presents to us. It's 600,000 to one. That's the ratio of debt that we have been forgiven compared to the debt that we have to forgive others. That's the first motivation of why we should forgive.

The parable also reminds us to forgive because of the consequences if we don't. Wrapping up the parable, the fellow servants report him to the king and in his righteous anger, he proclaims, you wicked servant.

[41 : 26] I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me and should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you. So he reinstates the debt throws him to the jailers.

Actually, some translations have torturers here which just goes to show how severe the consequences are for unforgiveness. Jesus makes the final admonition of this parable very clear. Forgive your brother and sister from your heart. From the very core of who you are, everything of your being, forgive. If you don't, the same will happen to you.

Forgiving from your heart means that you can't claim to be solid with this person but still than ever treat them so differently. Treat them a little bit colder than before.

Your answers get shorter. Your run-ins are less frequent because you're trying to avoid them. Your look becomes more like a scowl. Forgiving from your heart means that you can't claim to be good with this person but now you're withholding, giving the benefit of the doubt.

[42 : 41] Now you assume the worst about him or her. Instead of bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring all things, you curse, you doubt, you suspect, and you blame all things.

If we withhold forgiveness from our fellow servants, we become like doormats for Satan. We become just doormats for him to simply walk into our lives and wreak havoc on our relationships, on our livelihoods.

If we withhold forgiveness, we become enslaved and imprisoned by our pasts, always thinking about what happened to us, what we could have done, what we should have said, never letting that wound heal, always living in the past, never going into the future.

If we withhold forgiveness, we become bitter people. And as the famous quote goes, we ultimately drink the poison of bitterness hoping that the other person will drop dead.

Those are all infectious consequences of unforgiveness in our lives. If we don't deal with it now, that infection will spread and it'll spread. But the greatest consequence unforgiveness has is on your final standing before God.

[43 : 58] As the parable opens, the kingdom of heaven is coming. It is coming. And one day, the heavenly king will settle his accounts with all his servants.

And what our spiritual balance sheet says will have eternal consequences for our souls. Learning from this parable, we must be wary of forfeiting the forgiveness that we have received if we fail to forgive our fellow brothers and sisters around us.

And while this forgiveness is freely given, be very careful not to presume on it. That's an extremely dangerous thought.

In other words, there is a motivating fear of punishment in this parable. There's no denying it. And while the more fundamental motive to forgive is in fact gratitude and imitation of the mercy that we receive from the great high king, at the same time, Jesus does still appeal to our self-interest. So today, Jesus is asking you, what will you choose? Are you going to be found rich in this union with Christ by free grace, by admitting your need and accepting the pity and mercy of our God and imitating that forgiveness to your offenders?

[45 : 28] Or are you going to forfeit that grace by withholding it altogether, by refusing to forgive? Jesus loves us so much that he warns us clearly.

How you measure other people in this life will be how God measures you. Let me say that again to make that clear. How you measure other people in this life will be how God measures you.

If you measure others with grace and charity, God will measure you the same way. If you measure others with a wrathful, vengeance, a sinic spirit, God will do the same for you.

Because if you staunchly refuse to offer amazing grace to others, that's evidence that you likely haven't experienced it in the first place. You probably haven't repented, receiving an unbelievable debt forgiven.

Still, I want to say and hear me clearly, this doesn't mean that we are saved by our works. We're not saved by our perfect forgiveness. We have already talked about how this grace is completely free.

[46 : 38] Jesus is not saying that he starts the work that we then have to forgive or we have to then finish by our perfect obedience. It's not that we forgive others first in order to prove to God that we are good.

No, we never twist God's arm into loving us. No, this forgiveness forgiveness is an outpouring, an overflow of results of the forgiveness you had received.

And if you have received this forgiveness, the command is crystal clear. Brothers and sisters, forgive. There's someone on your heart right now that the spirit is putting on you, telling you to forgive that person, saying, hey, it's time.

It's time to let go of that bitterness. It's time to forgive. If you want to grow in forgiveness but don't know how, let me close with just a few steps that you can take.

Number one, fall on your face in desperate prayer. Sean taught a class yesterday on the power of prayer. Loving someone who has hurt you deeply is one of the greatest reminders that we cannot obey God without his amazing grace, his strength.

[47 : 58] We can't do it on our own. But the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Corrie Ten Boom was a woman with a nature like ours.

She prayed that she could forgive her Nazi captors. And in her heart, no bitterness reigned upon her. It's obviously not what James 5 says but forgiving feels as much of a miracle as not reigning for three and a half years.

So pray. Pray on your own. Pray with others. Pray with your pastors. Confess your sins of unforgiveness. Pray for yourself. Pray for your offender.

Famous theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray. No matter how much trouble he causes me. Because in prayer, we begin to see that person as God sees them.

As someone already forgiven or someone that God longs to forgive. Number two, remember, keep that in mind. That ratio of 600,000 to one.

[49 : 06] Bonhoeffer also said, if my sinfulness appears to me in any way any smaller or less detestable in comparison to the sins of others, I am still not recognizing my sinfulness at all.

So remember that ratio. Repent of your incredible debt of sin. Once you see that God has forgiven you, 600,000 of your sins ought to forgive just one of your brothers.

Number three, trust in God's justice. God will never let any sin go unpunished. either upon the son or upon the offender.

He will make all things that are wrong, he will make them right. He will vindicate the righteous. Trust in the ultimate justice that God will bring. Four, this is my last point.

Rinse and repeat. Forgiveness is both an event and a process. For the most painful of hurts, forgiveness needs to be a daily choice.

[50 : 10] The reality is that forgiveness is messy. Life is messy. It's not usually linear. Some days are harder than others. It's okay.

Just pick yourself up and rinse and repeat. Keep praying. Keep remembering that ratio. Keep trusting in God's justice. May we, Trinity Cambridge Church, be known by our forgiving hearts. toward one another and towards the world. Let's pray. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness so that we can, with reverence, serve you. Thank you, God, for your unbelievable grace towards us.

Wretched, weary, adulterous, sinful, lost people, your children, you have saved, you have redeemed.

[51 : 10] Help us to be like you. We want to be like you, to be able to forgive the people in our lives, to extend that amazing grace that we have received, so that the world will know us by our love.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.