

Scripture Text

Matthew 18:15-35

Context

In Matthew 18, Jesus teaches his disciples how precious everyone in the Kingdom of God is. To illustrate his point, Jesus tells the parable of the shepherd who left ninety-nine sheep to go and seek out the one lost sheep (v12-14). The parable highlights the love Jesus has for every one of his people.

Observation and Meaning

- How does v15-17 relate to the preceding parable in v12-14?
- Who is the 'brother' that Jesus mentions in v15?
- Who is to initiate reconciliation? v15
- How should one go about seeking reconciliation? v15-17
- In light of the high calling given to us in v15-17, how does v18-20 serve as an encouragement?
- How does Jesus help Peter understand that forgiving seven times is not enough? v21-35
- What does biblical forgiveness look like? v23-27
- What is so shocking about v28-30?
- Why were the fellow servants greatly distressed by what they saw? v31
- Why was the master angry with the servant? v32-33
- What was the consequence for failing to forgive a smaller debt? v34
- What was the main point of the parable? v35

Big Idea

We can radically forgive those who sin against us because we have been radically forgiven by God. We can seek reconciliation with those who offend us because God took the initiative to reconcile us to himself while we were still sinners.

Connecting to Bible Storyline

We have sinned greatly against God and are spiritually bankrupt. Unable to remove our sins on our own, we were deserving of death. But God, being rich in mercy, graciously sent Jesus to be our Saviour. Christ took our sins upon himself and died the death we deserve. In this manner, our debt was cleared. Through Christ's atoning work, we are forgiven of our sins and made members of the household of God. As such, we are now able to freely extend grace to others who offend us by having a willingness to forgive and initiating reconciliation.

Sermon Outline

1. God's forgiveness stems from his immeasurable grace v21-27
2. Having experienced God's immeasurable grace, we can and should forgive others v28-35
3. Initiate the process of reconciliation and forgiveness v15-20

Applications

- How has God's forgiveness impacted your life?
- How does this text highlight the importance of addressing unforgiveness?
- If a church member sins against you, how should you respond?
- What are some difficulties you face in forgiving others and how does this text help you overcome them?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.