



Life Group Sermon Study Notes

“Forgiveness”

Ps. JT McCraw and Ps. Daryl Fitzgerald – July 19, 2020

Warm-Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What is the story behind the time you went the longest without sleep?
- What has been your favorite road trip or vacation?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Matthew 18: 21 – 35 *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?”²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants....²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.....’³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’*

In the text, Peter posed the question about how many times is he required to forgive. Peter’s response shows that he knew the standard of Christ was high, but Jesus’ response was more than he anticipated. Jesus stated, “seventy times seven”!

Relevance

Forgiveness can be challenging. When we are wronged, we feel justified in our feelings and actions. Whether we chose to stay in the relationship or not; feelings of bitterness, anger, resentment, or trying to be indifferent stew inside of us. It becomes perplexing to extend mercy when the person doesn't reciprocate in the way we deem necessary. Furthermore, we see a grand scale of responses from offense with the white and black relations in America. How do we respond to the lack of justice as individuals and as a nation? Ps. JT and Ps. Daryl speak on justice through the lens of the relevance, necessity, and the command of Christ to forgive.

Necessity

We see how forgiveness and unforgiveness play out in our text. The servant owed the king ten thousand talents, equivalent to billions of dollars today. The servant couldn't pay, so the master ordered that he, his wife, children, and possessions be sold to make payment. The servant begged for mercy and time to repay. The reality is there was no way he could repay the debt in his lifetime. The master chose to release him and forgave the debt! The servant finds himself in a similar situation with someone owing him money. Instead of practicing forgiveness, he puts the man in jail. The master gets word and calls the servant wicked for his lack of forgiveness. The servant finds himself in jail until he is willing to pay back all of his debt. Hopefully, he will also forgive the man just as he was initially forgiven. The king operated from God's heart by practicing forgiveness; the servant was bound because he chose not to forgive. In other words, forgiveness is a crisis of our will. Regardless, we bear the burden of the wrong placed on us through forgiveness or bondage. The bondage will be on us, not the other person. Culture tells blacks they are justified to hold grudges against whites for their forefathers' sins or the privilege they experience. Culture tells whites they are justified to be mad because they are not responsible for their forefathers' sins; nor is there a need to disrupt America on behalf of non-whites. Culture tells each human, as a freewill individual, that they have a right to their response when things don't go how they want. The kingdom culture says we have all wronged each other and God. Ultimately, we have to answer to God the holy and just one. Christ provides the only common ground by paying for the wrongs of humanity on the cross.

Command

We should not compare ourselves to one another, but Christ. He went first when he died on the cross, paying our insurmountable debt; in response, we are commanded to forgive others. Ps. JT and Daryl list four thoughts to help us choose forgiveness. First, realize it is a choice. Forgiveness is about moving beyond feelings to recognizing the personal impact of forgiving or not forgiving (James 1:13- 14). Second, realize not to forgive is to stop our growth and put ourselves in spiritual bondage. Third, realize the cross is the great equalizer. When Jesus was on the cross dying for our sins, he didn't say get them; he said forgive them. Fourth, realize Christ is the only one who gives freedom. To be free in Jesus is to have the supernatural ability to bear wrongdoing in light of Christ bearing our wrong. Yes, even after four hundred years of the practice and impact of slavery, the possibility of reconciliation is still difficult, especially without following Christ's precepts and commandments.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose one of the points below, and discuss how the lesson applies to our lives.

- Share an experience when it was hard to forgive someone.
- Which of the four thoughts on choosing to forgive stands out, and why?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as other requests you may have.

- Thank God for the power of the cross that sets us free to forgive and walk in freedom.
- Ask God for the conviction that the justice of God is better than the justice of culture.
- Ask God to bring to mind people we need to forgive and the strength to walk in it.