

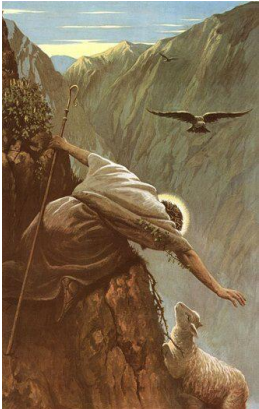
Matthew 18:23-35 “The Amazing Forgiveness of God”

9.3.17

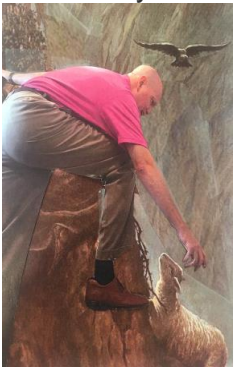
The Title of this morning’s message is: **“The Amazing Forgiveness of God.”** This morning, we’re going to look once again at the fabulous teaching of Jesus in what is called His “Discourse on Humility.” As you know Jesus has been teaching with a small boy in His lap. He’s teaching about humility.



In order to come to Jesus, you must come humble and unpretentious like a child. He’s taught us that we should never create a stumbling block for a weaker brother or sister in Christ. He’s also taught us how to restore a wayward brother or sister in Christ. Of course, He uses Himself as the prime example:



But, then He turned the tables and said, “You must go to a brother who has offended you and seek to rescue them:



Last week we saw Peter ask the question: “Lord, how many times do I have to forgive my brother?...Seven times?” And Jesus stunned Peter and all the other disciples when He said, “Nope, it’s unlimited.” Remember, we used the example of Joseph from the OT...



His brothers had devastated his life by selling him out to Egyptians; and yet, he would choose to forgive them. Remember the picture where he was hugging and weeping with his brothers?



Folks, it's been a gut-wrenching ride. Last week was powerful, because forgiveness is such a powerful thing. Truly, as we learned, forgiveness is the nucleus and the epicenter of the Gospel. It's been said that: **Forgiveness is an act of the Holy Spirit in the life of a surrendered Christian.** And I agree with that...because forgiveness...true forgiveness that's Spirit-led is going to be something that goes totally against the grain of our flesh. It is indeed, a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit to forgive who has wronged us so intensely!

This morning we're going to see Jesus go deeper in answering Peter's question, by telling another parable...another very powerful parable. **Follow along with me in verse 23.**

Matthew 18:23-35

²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ 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. 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.' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ 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. 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?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his

debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Church family, I believe we can sum up this entire parable with this one verse.

Ephesians 4:32

³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

That is a fantastic verse of summary for this parable of Jesus! Church family, we must never forget what Jesus did for us! He died on the cross before you and I were ever born and with His death Jesus bought our pardon with His own blood on the cross. May we never forget Romans 5:8:

Romans 5:8

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Church, forgiveness IS THE GOSPEL. Forgiveness is our deliverance!

Listen to me please: unless we humble ourselves and offer forgiveness in our lives, I promise you...YOU WILL STRUGGLE with every relationship in your life. You mark it down! If you are an unforgiving person, if you are a bitter person...you WILL be a person who will consistently struggle with every relationship in your life.

Listen, if you are constantly trying to imagine ways to punish the people in your life who have hurt you, then you HAVEN'T forgiven and you're in prison...a prison made by your own unforgiveness and bitterness because you choose NOT to humble yourself and forgive. If that's you, then I can almost guarantee you that you're miserable and you will live in anguish and torment in your soul in that condition. You see, we reveal the true condition of our hearts by the way we treat others. **And that's what we see in this parable Jesus has just told to His disciples.**

Now this parable is very straightforward, and very clear. The main principle being taught by Jesus is obvious. Because you've been forgiven a lot...you should be willing to forgive! Let's unpack this principle...

Matthew 18:23

²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

Now, let's start by asking, “Who is the King and who is this servant?” Well, the King in the parable is God, because it's the kingdom of heaven that Jesus is describing and the servants would be us...Christians...His followers. But, I want you to notice something about that word: SERVANT. In my reference Bible it has a small number beside of it and if I look down at the bottom of the page it says: “**Bondservant**.”

The word in the Greek is: DOULOS.

Doulos: bondservant; one devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests

You may remember, a bondservant is a slave that's been set free because he or she chooses to remain with the Master and serve him and they take an awl and they pierce their ear and then place the Master's signet on a ring indicating that person has ON HIS/HER OWN chosen to stay with the Master, even though they've been set free.

Folks, this is a Christian that Jesus is describing. In fact, the way Jesus words this gives us an indication that this BONDSERVANT has been placed in charge of some of the King's properties, because the King wants to "settle accounts" with the servant. See it again...

Matthew 18:23

²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants."

So, this servant Jesus is describing has charge over some portion of the Kingdom for the King and isn't that just like us as God's servants today. He has given us gifts, abilities and talents and we are to use them in His kingdom and we will give an accounting one day for how we've used those talents. So, what happened?

Matthew 18:24

²⁴ "When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents."

Church, this idea of 10,000 talents is something we don't understand, because we don't buy and sell things with first century money. So, let's put this in perspective. Get this...the entire revenue of taxes that the nation of Israel paid to Rome in the first century was just 800 talents. And this guy somehow owes 10,000 talents.

A talent in that day was worth 20 year's labor for a working man. 20 years! Let's put that in today's language. I looked it up. According to the most recent US Census figures from 2014, the median household income in America across all jobs was \$52,000. Now if you multiply \$52,000 times 20 years (to equal 1 talent) you get: \$1,040,000. So, one talent was worth...

\$52,000 x 20= \$1,040,000 (Equals 1 Talent)

\$1,040,000 x 10,000= \$10.4 Billion (Equals 10,000 Talents)

What did the King do? He forgave him, right? Yes! But, what about the servant...what did he end up doing...not forgiving, right? Another guy owed him money. See it...

Matthew 18:28

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.'"

Now, this guy was owed 100 denarii. A denarii was worth one day's wage for a common laborer. Today, based on the 2014 census numbers, that would be around \$200 for a day's wage. So...

\$200 per day x 100 days = \$20,000

\$10,400,000,000 versus \$20,000

Folks, let me put it this way... It's like you owing me \$20 and I want to throw you in jail for that even though I've been forgiven a debt of \$1 million. Can you grasp that! **20 bucks versus 1 million!**

How can this be? That's what unforgiveness does! It hardens the human heart! And please don't forget: **this is a Christian's heart**. This is a DOULOS, a bondservant to the King...to Almighty God in this parable!

Did you notice what the servant was going to have to do to pay the debt.

Matthew 18:25

²⁵ 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.

This is awful! Do you understand what this means? It means that he and his wife and his children would all have to be sold on the auction block and they could be sold to anyone. Most likely split up and the children going one place and the wife another place, never to be seen again! What a travesty!

You know, I'm going to stop here for a moment and pose this question. If this King in this parable that Jesus is telling is God, why would God be okay with chastising His servant? Would God really chastise and rebuke His people? Well, let's see. Does God admonish and chide His children for disobedience? I mean...after all...particularly in our culture today...everyone says, "God is love...to the point that He'll allow anything...any lifestyle...anything...because He's so loving... He'll just overlook disobedience and sin and unforgiveness, right?"

Hebrews 12:5-12

⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." ⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Parents, do you let your kids get away with murder? Do you just look the other way when they're disobedient? Of course not!! Not if you're going to raise a child that's obedient and not a brat!

Let me tell you something Church family, I've felt the chastisement of the Lord in my life. There have been times in my life that I was running from what I knew God wanted in my life and those times were very unsettling occasions in my life. I had NO PEACE. NO CONTENTMENT. Listen, let me tell you what I've learned through the years, you can't be running from the Lord and expect Him to bless you! That goes counter to His nature. He can't bless sin...any more than I can flap my arms and fly...that goes against my nature.

No...if we're running from the Lord we can expect NOT BLESSINGS...but, the opposite... We can expect the Holy Spirit to bring conviction in our lives to draw us back to Himself. You see, here in this parable, the King is chastising His servant for being disobedient, so that he might

be restored. So, the King here...is levying the just SENTENCE to the servant for his crime. And so, what does the Doulos do? The only thing he could do...BEG FOR MERCY!

Matthew 18:26

²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'

"I will pay you everything!" Is this guy out of his mind! He owes \$10.4 billion dollars and he makes \$200 a day. It would take him. Folks, I did the math...it would take that guy 52 million days of work to pay off the debt! He's out of his mind! He can't pay it off. He would have to live 142,465 years to pay it off. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!!! And that's Jesus' point!

Hey church family...that debt...that's our sin debt. Do you understand that? Our sin debt is impossible to pay off! We stand before the King...and we look at our sin and we realize there is no way we could ever pay off our sin debt. It's HOPELESS! It's too big! We can't do it! The only thing we can do is to realize that and to plead for mercy and cry out: "Dear God...save me from my debt!"

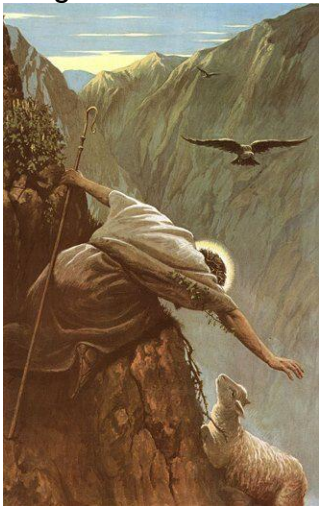
What did the King do?

Matthew 18:27

²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

Think of that: Even though the King had been robbed...He forgave him the debt!!!

Wow! Oh wow! That's amazing!!! Isn't it!!! That's why I love the song: "Amazing Grace." *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me... I once was lost (utterly hopeless to pay my debt), But now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see.* Why? Because God absorbed my debt. He sent His Son to pay my debt...Amazing Grace! The Amazing Forgiveness of God! That Jesus would come and reach down and rescue me!



That's me! I'm that sheep! And I didn't deserve to be rescued!

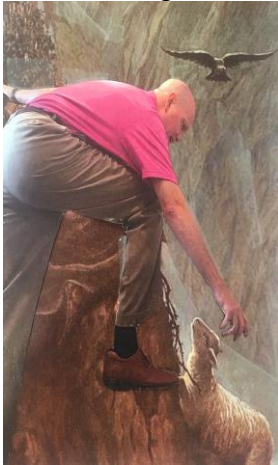
Oh, I feel like Horatio Spafford, when he wrote, "It Is Well With My Soul," when he penned such powerful words that gushed out his soul when realizing what Jesus had done to cancel his sin debt. See it...

**My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!**

Have you thought about your sin lately? HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT JESUS DID FOR YOU? Have you thought about lately the dire straits you were in before you came to Christ? Your utter inability to pay...no hope of ever being able to work off that sin debt?

But something happened... You came to the King...broken and repentant, you came to King Jesus and you fell to your knees and said, "Please forgive me!" And what Jesus did for you? He took pity on you and He forgave your sin debt. How... Because He paid your debt on the cross of Calvary with His own blood! LISTEN: He wrote across your sin debt: "Paid in Full." Oh...what amazing grace!! The Amazing Forgiveness of God! **And now what are we to do?**

We are to go and show that same grace and forgiveness, right? Kevin is to reach down...



I'm now in the place of Jesus, because He's in heaven...and so, I go on His behalf, showing mercy and forgiveness. We go and rescue people who have sinned against us! Just like Jesus did!

So, what did the servant do? He went out and did the same, right? No! Instead, he was so ungrateful, that he went out and did the opposite! He got a man who owed him \$20 bucks and threw him in jail! For \$20 bucks...when he had just been forgiven a million dollars! Unbelievable! Or is it?

You see, that's what we do when we don't forgive! And for this guy...it's even worse...because he went looking for the man that owed him \$20 bucks...

Matthew 18:28

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.'

He hadn't learned his lesson, had he? Remember our definition of forgiveness...

Forgiveness: *the intentional and voluntary process by which a **victim** undergoes a change in feelings and attitude regarding an offense, where the victim let's go of negative emotions such as vengefulness, with an **increased ability to wish the offender well.***

The servant hadn't learned anything, had he? And that was Jesus' point!

Jesus was teaching His disciples that in order for someone to represent Him well after He leaves the earth...after giving His life in an act of selfless humility...they would also have to be willing to do the same...to show great humility and forgiveness...to reach over the ledge and forgive someone who had hurt them greatly!

So, what happened next? Well, the other servants saw all of this play out before their eyes and they went and told the King and the King threw the man into debtor's prison. What a sad ending. **But, I don't want to end there.** I want to end with the story of the Prodigal Son. I've mentioned this story a couple of times over the last few weeks.

You remember the story... A young man...perhaps like this young man shown on the screens...comes to his father...



He wants his inheritance. The bad thing is...it was like wishing his father dead. You don't get an inheritance until there's a death. But, the boy didn't care and he asked for it anyway. Well, the father had to make arrangements...probably had to sell some land, or livestock to make it happen... But, he gave the boy his inheritance...



You know it had to break the mother's heart... So, the young man head's out and proceeds to waste it all in "reckless living." He got to the point that he had nothing left...no friends...no money...no food...and so he hired himself out to a pig farmer. A young Jewish boy...slopping pigs. It doesn't get any worse than that, right? Well, it did... The boy got so hungry he started eating with the pigs...



What a terrible picture! It's amazing what sin can do! Takes us places we never dreamed!

But, look with me now at verse 17. One of the greatest verses in all of the Bible.

Luke 15:17-19

¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'"

A "hired servant" was a day-worker. They had no rights to the family whatsoever. This boy was humbled. He was rocked to the core and you know he had to hope against hope that he could go back to his father and his father would forgive him.

And so off he went... He headed home! **Look at verse 20.**

Luke 15:20

²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

Church family, do you know how undignified it was for an older man to be seen running in that day? An older man didn't run for fear of showing undergarment beneath his robe...so, an older man might walk fast, but no...he'd never run!

Not so with this Father...He RAN!!! He didn't care! He loved his son! He "felt compassion." That word "compassion" in verse 20 of Luke 15 is the same Greek word of Matthew 18, verse 27, when the King had "pity" on the servant. The word is splagchnizomai It's to feel something in your gut...your bowels...to the point that you choose to forgive.

Yes, you CAN reach a place in your spirit that you can forgive. The Father ran to his son and forgave him. Did the son deserve it? No! And that's why forgiveness is amazing!

Forgiveness is undeserved! You can't work for it...you can't earn it...you can't buy it. It's offered freely, just like God, who offers it today. Oh, we've got to forgive! God will help us! Oh..."The Amazing Power Forgiveness of God!"
