

Sunday 03/16/25 – Panama Methodist Church

Sermon Title: “The Road to Redemption” Sermon Series: Part 2 of 7 – “Forgiveness and Community” 1 John 1:9, Ephesians 4:32, Matthew 18:21-35

(Slides 1-16 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)

Last week we started a new sermon series that will bring us through Easter Sunday, called “The Road to Redemption.” We are invited in this season of Lent to symbolically walk with Jesus to his cross on Good Friday. On Good Friday, Jesus will give up his life for us all. In doing so, Jesus will offer us forgiveness, and this forgiveness is offered to the entire world or community. Here is our opening slide for this morning:

Slide 1 – (“The Road to Redemption – Part 2” – Opening Slide”)

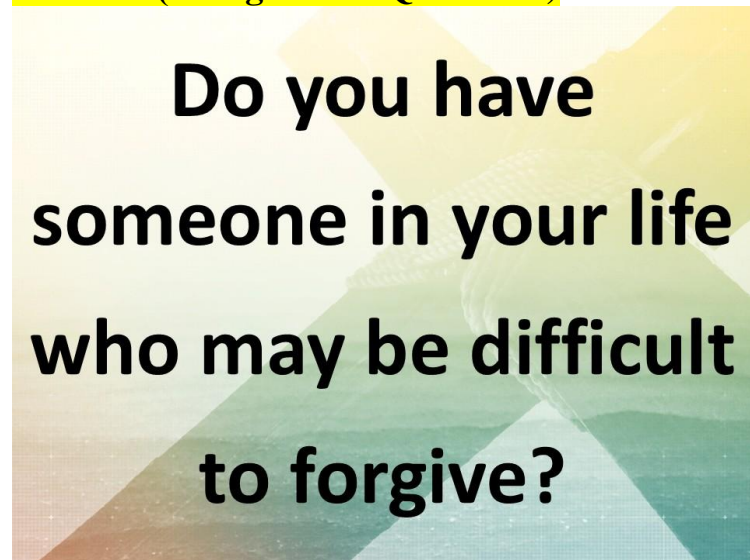


This morning, once again, we are joining Jesus with his journey to his cross, and then eventually to His empty tomb on Easter Sunday. As we go through this

sermon series, we will be discussing Jesus' life, how he lived, and how we can all be more like Him.

With this said, our sermon title this morning is called "Forgiveness and Community." Around this sermon title, I have a question for us all to consider:

Slide 2 – ("Forgiveness Question")



What we are going to get into here in a few minutes, is a parable or story from Jesus, from Matthew 18:21-35, about forgiveness. Jesus, on that first Good Friday and always offers us forgiveness through his cross. Jesus died even for those that hated Him. In fact, He asked God the father to forgive those who were doing what they were doing to Him, for they knew not what they were doing. Jesus tells us very clearly, as we walk this "Road to Redemption" together that we have to forgive each other and live in community together. Saying this is very easy, but for some of us forgiving is very hard. I mean, we might think of a person or persons that did awful things, and yet Jesus tells us we must forgive. This does not mean

that the person or persons that wronged us are going to become our best friends, but Jesus wants us to let go of the anger, the hurt, and the pain. Why? Well, as my late Grandpa Winkelman used to say, “When you don’t forgive someone, you are letting them live rent free in your head.” The devil is angry, and unforgiveness is often angry. Unforgiveness can consume us, and on the cross Jesus accomplished our forgiveness, if we but turn to Him. Not only this, but we also need to confess our sins and ask God for forgiveness. In fact, I want to read a verse of scripture from 1 John. If you open your bibles or bible apps to 1 John 1:9, we hear these words:

Slide 3 – (“1 John 1:9, NRSV)

1 John 1:9, NRSV

⁹ If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we turn to God, to Jesus, and ask for forgiveness we will be forgiven, and 1 John 1:9 says, and it will also “cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. If Jesus will always forgive us if we sincerely turn to him for forgiveness, then why do we sometimes have a hard time forgiving each other?

For those of us that sometimes listen to Family Life Network on the radio, we may have heard Pastor Chip Ingram preach. I was given a really good quote last week from Chip Ingram that I want to read for us all this morning. Here is the quote: “Forgiveness is not about letting someone off the hook. It is about taking them off your hook and placing them on God’s. You release them, and God, who is perfectly just, takes care of the rest” (Chip Ingram). Jesus died on the cross so that we may be forgiven, and Jesus offers us forgiveness whenever we turn to him for forgiveness. Yet can we forgive each other? If we have people that we cannot forgive this morning, why is this? Pride? Anger? Power? Jesus calls to forgive, and as I said, this does not mean that you become best friends, but it does mean that you give it to God. Here is one more verse of scripture before our preaching scripture for this morning. If you want to turn from your bibles or bible apps from 1 John to Ephesians, the Apostle Paul tell us about love and forgiveness in Ephesians 4:32. This is what the Apostle Paul tells us:

Slide 4 – (“Ephesians 4:32, NRSV”)

Ephesians 4:32, NRSV

32 and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

The founder of the Methodist Movement, John Wesley famously preached a sermon called, “The Almost Christian.” To know Jesus, to feel the Holy Spirit, to be forgiven and to forgive others is a big part of what it means to be a Christian. We have to forgive each other, because if we do not, it can destroy us. Some might say, “but Pastor Paul I am right, and the other person is wrong.” On the cross, Jesus asked the Heavenly Father to forgive all the people there engaged in His torture and His death. When we forgive others, we surrender all of this to God. It is so heavy to carry. Sometimes some people carry it around for years, but the more I draw closer to Christ, the more I want to be reconciled, to forgive, and to be forgiven. This is what Jesus asks of us. Here is a great picture of Ephesians 4:32:

Slide 5 – (“Ephesians 4:32 - Picture”)



Anger, pride, arrogance, and on and on, are all milestones around our necks. Forgiveness frees us from that burden. So emphatic was Jesus about this, among

many other examples, we are given the parable or the story this morning, “of the Unforgiving Servant.” Before this parable though from our preaching scripture for this morning, the Apostle Peter asks Jesus about forgiveness. If you want to turn in your bibles or your bible apps to the gospel of Matthew, let us read through Matthew 18:21-35 together. Once again, Matthew 18:21-35 says this:

Slide 6 – (“Matthew 18:21-22, NRSV”)

Matthew 18:21-35

Forgiveness

²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ ²² Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

Slide 7 – (“Matthew 18:23-24, NRSV”)

Matthew 18:21-35

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²³ ‘For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him;

Slide 8 – (“Matthew 18:25-27, NRSV”)

Matthew 18:21-35

²⁵ and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

Slide 9 – (“Matthew 18:28-30, NRSV”)

Matthew 18:21-35

²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, “Pay what you owe.” ²⁹ Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you.” ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt.

Slide 10 – (“Matthew 18:31-32, NRSV”)

Matthew 18:21-35

³¹ When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

Slide 11 – (“Matthew 18:33-35, NRSV”)

Matthew 18:21-35

³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?” ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.’

Let us first look at Matthew 18:21-22 together. In these first two verses of this gospel reading for this morning, the Apostle Peter comes to Jesus to ask him a question. Peter was always very outspoken, so this is not a shock for me at all. Peter asks Jesus this question, once again, “if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?” Peter then asks him should he forgive the person seven times” Jesus then responds to Peter, ‘Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times.’ Some bible translations even have seven times seventy times, or 490 times. Forgiveness is not always easy, but Jesus tells us that we have to forgive each other. In fact, he tells the Apostle Peter, based on the bible translation, that it might be 490 times we have to forgive.

The late and great Christian scholar, CS Lewis wrote so many wonderful things, but one quote comes to mind. I am paraphrasing this quote or trying to remember the basics of it. CS Lewis said this about hell though, “The doors of hell

are locked from the inside.” So, who is in hell according to CS Lewis? The answer is, everyone, who wants to be there. I can imagine those people are angry, prideful, envious, unforgiving, and filled with rage. The cross of Jesus Christ, “The Road to Redemption” that we are symbolically walking together ends with forgiveness on Christ’s cross. In this season of Lent and always, do we forgive, do we ask for forgiveness, or are we angry, prideful, envious, etc. Hell is a place where the doors are locked from the inside. I certainly can believe that this is true, forgiveness though, is what Jesus offers us everyone moment of every day, if we but turn to Him.

Getting back to Jesus telling the Apostle Peter that he must forgive seventy times, or even four-hundred and ninety times, Jesus then tells Peter a parable or a story about forgiveness. This story or parable is called, “The Parable of the Unforgiven Servant,” is only in Matthew’s gospel, Let us unpack a little bit of what it says to us this morning. Jesus begins this parable or story as he does in other places in the gospels. Jesus says, “the kingdom of heaven may be compared to.” When Jesus returns to reign on earth in his second coming for a thousand years, this is the fullness on earth of the kingdom of heaven. The continuation of being with Jesus for eternity is the fullness of the eternal kingdom of heaven. Further, when Jesus came to earth, His kingdom started breaking into this world.

In this parable or story of “the Unforgiving Servant,” Jesus talked about a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. For those of us who have a house mortgage or a car loan, imagine if the whole sum we owe came suddenly due? Could you pay that all off at once? In this story or parable for this morning, the king has a man brought to him that owed the king ten thousand talents. According to some of the research I have done a “talent” in the bible is: “was equal to about 75–100 pounds”. Further One talent was also equal to about 20 years of wages for a laborer. 75-100 pounds, generally speaking of some kind of metal. Perhaps gold, silver, or bronze, and this slave owes his king ten thousand talents! What is ten thousand times let say times 80. This is the number of pounds of a valuable or precious metal that this slave owes his king. So generally speaking, a talent is some sort of weight of money or valuable or precious metal. Can you imagine owing a king that much?

As we can imagine, as we heard, once again, this king’s slave cannot pay back such a sum, at least not right now. The king then orders that the slave, his wife, and children, and all their possessions be sold to regain the lost debt. Right then though, once again, this slave who owes his king all this money or wealth falls on his knees. The in-debt slave pleads with his king and asks his king to have patience with him, and he will repay the king everything. So moved by this and with great pity, the king was not only willing to extend the time he had to pay him

back, but the king also then released him and his family. Further, the king forgave his debt. Not just a loan extension, but no more loan. No more debt! Or as some of say, his debt was “forgiven.” One would think, hopefully one would hope that this experience of being forgiven of his debt by his king, would change this formally debt-ridden slave.

So, we would hope then that this slave that was forgiven of his debt by his king would be changed by this experience. We would hope that this forgiven slave would be more forgiving. Not at all. As this slave was forgiven a great sum of debt, this slave then saw another fellow slave that was indebted to him. This debt, a hundred denarii, or a hundred coins, much less by far than the ten-thousand talents that this slave had just owed his king. One would hope that the slave that was forgiven much more by his king would then forgive the fellow slave that owed him much less. However, the slave that was forgiven the ten-thousand talents of debt then grabs the fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii, or one-hundred coins, around the throat.

The slave just forgiven by his king for ten-thousand talents of debt, then tells the fellow slave who owes him a hundred denarii or one-hundred silver coins, to pay up. The fellow slave who owed the slave one-hundred denarii, or one-hundred silver coins fell on the ground pleaded with the other slave, like the other slave just did to his king. Once again, that slave pleaded with the king, and was forgiven his

ten-thousand talents of debt. Yet the slave that was forgiven so much more debt by his king would not forgive his fellow slave's debt that owed him so much less. In fact, the slave that was forgiven of owing ten-thousand talents had the slave who owed him 100 denarii or one-hundred silver coins out in prison until his debt was paid off.

As you can imagine, the other slaves that watched this were disgusted and angry. I mean the king just forgave this man way more debt than his fellow slave owed him, and yet the slave who was forgiven much more, could not forgive a fellow slave who owed him much less. So, the fellow slaves then went and told their lord, what that slave that had been forgiven of the ten-thousand talents did to the slave that owed him one-hundred denarii, or one-hundred silver coins. The king, who is now understandably angry, brings the slave back in that he forgave ten-thousand talents, and called him a "wicked slave!" Since the slave forgiven of the ten-thousand talents did not show mercy and forgiveness on a fellow slave that owed so much less, the king reinstated the slave's ten-thousand talents of debt. Further, the same slave was ordered to be tortured until the full debt was paid off to his king.

Jesus then ends our reading from Matthew 18:21-35, saying in 18:35 this about forgiving each other: "³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart'" (Mt. 18:35,

NRSV). Jesus Christ, our Lord, commands us to forgive others, and we are called to repent and come to Christ for our own sins and mistakes. With this, here is a good picture to have us think more about forgiveness:

Slide 12 – (“Do I Have To Forgive? - Picture”)



This morning, on this “Road to Redemption,” Jesus tells us to forgive, to turn to him for forgiveness, to do this in the Christian community. Forgiveness, and powerful Christian community are things that Jesus taught us, and commands of us. In fact, here is a good summary slide on “Forgiveness and Community”:

Slide 13 – (“Forgiveness and Community”)

“Forgiveness and Community”

Forgiveness is crucial for building and maintaining healthy church communities, as it allows for reconciliation, healing, and a more unified fellowship, mirroring God's own forgiving nature.

This idea of “Forgiveness and Community” is central to Jesus Christ and his gospel and is part of the strength of strong and healthy churches. In looking at how this all applies to our lives today, let us look together:

Slide 14 – (“Application to Our Lives # 1”)

Application to Our Lives # 1

- **Biblical Mandate:** The Bible emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, urging believers to forgive one another as God has forgiven them.
- **Foundation of Community:** Forgiveness is a cornerstone of healthy relationships and a vital element for a thriving community.

“Forgiveness and Community” are biblical mandates and, once again, given to us by Jesus Christ in the bible. The foundation of community is a big part of this, and a big part of the strength of the Christian Church.

Why else should we forgive and ask for forgiveness? Let us look at our second application to our lives slide for this morning:

Slide 15 – (“Application to Our Lives # 2”)

Application to Our Lives # 2

- **Reflection of God's Grace:**

Forgiveness in the church mirrors God's grace and mercy, demonstrating the transformative power of His love.

- **Personal Liberation:** Forgiving others can lead to personal liberation from bitterness, resentment, and anger, allowing individuals to experience peace and freedom.

I am really looking forward to my first walk to the crosses on Holy Saturday, or the night before easter. We will all be invited to go to a place near here, and in part put a stone or many at the feet of Jesus' cross. We ask Him for forgiveness, and he offers it to us over and over. When we forgive others it frees us of the burden, from bitterness, from resentment, from anger, gives us peace and freedom, and helps us to focus more on Christ.

Finally, we walk this “Road to Redemption,” to Christ’s cross on Good Friday together, if we go to Christ for forgiveness and offer forgiveness to each other, it will strengthen our sense of Christian Community. It will unite us more. Our final application to our lives slide for this morning, shows us and this church how to continue to be an example to Panama and to the world. Let us look together:

Slide 16 – (“Application to Our Lives # 3”)

Application to Our Lives # 3

- **Example to the World:** A church that practices forgiveness sets an example for the world, demonstrating the power of grace and reconciliation.

As I call the praise team forward to sing, when is the last time that we went to Jesus for forgiveness? Are we withholding forgiveness from someone of more than one person? If we are, how is it affecting us? Jesus calls us to forgive, to be forgiven, and to reconciled together as the body of Christ. On this “Road to Redemption,” Jesus on Good Friday will offer his persecutors forgiveness, and he will offer us all forgiveness through his shed blood on the cross. May all embrace “Forgiveness and Community,” this day and always. Amen.