

Thanksgiving Sunday

Today's Title: "The Flow of Grace"

November 26, 2017 - Matthew 18:21-35 - The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

OBJECTIVE: To help Christians be thankful for God's grace, and passionate to give God's grace to others.

Testimony (Todd Mehall)

- 1) Tell us who you are - and how long have you been attending CDOBC?
- 2) You live in Eagle Crest - in Catalina - Art & Stella Betham are neighbors, and they reached out to you and you've become friends - and they invited you to come to this church...
- 3) When did you put your faith in Christ?
- 4) You have a few verses to share with us - Colossians 1:19-22 (NLT)
- 5) Why are those verses important to you?

Prayer for Todd - opening prayer

Turn to Matthew 18

This is "*The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant*" - a parable which Jesus shares when Peter asks a question about how many times we should forgive someone when they sin against us.

The parable is a collection of outrageous things.

- An outrageous debt...
- An outrageous solution...
- Followed by an outrageous response...

- Which leads public outrage...

The parable's conclusion is not outrageous, but for many of us, it's a concerning reality about the forgiveness of our own sins.

The grace of God flows to us when we repent of our sin and ask for His forgiveness, and it should flow from us to the world.

There seems to be a connection between how thankful we are for the grace and forgiveness we have received, and the grace and forgiveness we give to others. (vs. 21-22)

In the parable we'll read today, the servant pleaded for his master's grace and forgiveness, but he failed to give grace and forgive others as he had been forgiven.

Read vs. 21-35

Our outrageous debt vs. 23-25

The servant's debt was outrageous - millions and millions of dollars! One commentator states:

“From historical documents of the time it has been determined that the total annual revenue collected by the Roman government from Idumea, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee was about 900 talents. Based on those figures, 10,000 talents amounted to more than 11 years of taxes from those four provinces.”

(The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 16-23, by John MacArthur, p. 148)

There is no way a servant could ever pay this back. Everyone would have laughed when Jesus mentioned how much this servant owed his master - because it was outrageous! Jesus is using hyperbole to make the point: This is an unpayable debt.

The reality is we're this servant.

Our sin has created a debt we can never repay.

I think of the line from the 1986 movie "Top Gun", where the commanding officer tells the hot-shot pilot, "*Son, your ego is writing checks your body can't cash!*"

This is true of us - "*Our sinful ways are writing checks our soul can't cash!*"

The first step in salvation is to realize your sin - the enormity of your sin!

Hebrews 4:13

"And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Romans 3:9-10

...both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one..."

If you think your sin is minimal, then you probably think you can handle things by yourself.

But when you understand the outrageous pile of sin in your life - you are beginning to understand why Jesus had to die on the cross to pay for your sins.

We are all so different - different backgrounds - grew up in different places around the country - different family dynamics - different education experiences - different in our marriages, our jobs, our finances, and our personal tastes. But something we all have in common: Our sin. Sin is a part of our life.

Sin is a part of your family...your marriage...your friendships...and sin is part of this church (& every church).

This is not an excuse - or to dismiss the danger and pain of sin, but simply to make sure we're not looking at life...any part of our life through *rose-colored glasses*.

We must see ourselves and the world as the Bible describes...and as God sees it. Sin infiltrates every aspect of our life.

Sin causes conflict in relationships...it causes pain...it leaves deep wounds and sometimes it leaves life-long scars.

All of us are impacted and limited by our own sin...and by the sin of others.

We all have an outrageous debt of sin.

God's outrageous solution to our debt vs. 26-27

The outrageous amount of debt is surpassed only by the outrageous solution of the master. The servant pleads for mercy - pleads for patience and grace - and the master gives it.

He doesn't simply extend the note or reduce the interest or give a 3-month reprieve on the payments...

HE FORGIVES THE ENTIRE DEBT!!!!

We are saved - forgiven of our sins, by only one thing: the outrageous and generous grace of God.

We receive what we do not deserve. We deserve judgment and death, but we're given forgiveness and life!

God gives us His grace, so we can give grace to others. His grace in our life is supposed to be shared - it's supposed to flow from God - to us - to others.

2 places where sin is often not forgiven: Marriage and the church.

We tend to forgive those we work with - those we go to school with - our neighbors...because we expect them to sin. If they are unbelievers, we expect them to sin, and we're more likely to give grace and extend forgiveness. But our spouse...those in the church...we expect much more of them (and we should) - but we often castigate and judge when they sin, instead of giving grace and extending forgiveness.

Here's the difficult truth about grace and forgiveness: The person hurt...the person with the pain and the deep wound...is the person who needs to extend grace and forgive. **WE WILL NEVER BE A CHURCH OF**

GRACE UNLESS WE ARE WILLING TO WORK
THROUGH DIFFICULT AND PAINFUL
EXPERIENCES WITH ONE ANOTHER.

After all, that's what Jesus did for us!

2 Corinthians 5:21

"For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

One of the greatest obstacles to forgiving someone is the amount of pain we still feel from the offense.

If the pain is too great, we determine we're unable to give grace and forgive. ("too soon" - "too fresh")

Many Christians flee from their marriage - or they leave the church when they are sinned against. I understand this reaction - it makes sense - humanly speaking, it's the quickest solution and usually the easiest (although not easy). I get it...leaving is the quickest way to escape a painful and difficult situation.

But most of the time, the godly and Biblical solution is to see it through - to let grace flow from you to the person who has sinned against you...77X if necessary!

I say this realizing there are times you must leave...when your safety is threatened...when there is not a hint of repentance and the sin is increasing...when the church leadership is passive and does nothing to address the sin or help to resolve the issue.

But many times, we never stay and allow grace and forgiveness to be applied, and therefore grace and forgiveness often remain as theories - theological ideas and truth - which we never experience in their fullness. What I'm saying may come across as outrageous...and it is...because grace is outrageous!

The outrageous response to grace vs. 28-30

The servant who is forgiven of millions of dollars, finds someone who owes him a few thousand dollars, and assaults them as they try and collect on the debt.

100 Denarii was about 100 day's wages for a common laborer in NT times. Compared to the millions of dollars which comprised the debt of the first servant, this amount of money was microscopic. It's not an insignificant debt, but in comparison, there was no comparison.

When you read the parable, you're shocked by the servant's behavior and lack of grace. For someone who moments before received so much grace and forgiveness, this lack of grace and forgiveness toward one of his own debtors is outrageously offensive.

When a Christian refuses to give grace and forgiveness to another - when a Christian (a saved sinner) reacts to sin with only condemnation and judgment, something is not lining up.

It's not that we ignore sin, but so often grace and forgiveness are not even on the table - not even an option or an afterthought.

Of all people in the world, Christians are supposed to be grace-givers. Desiring to see this in action, John Wesley wrote, "*If this be Christianity, where do Christians live?*"

When they look at us, when they look at you - what does the world see? A Christian who gives grace and forgives - or a Christian who points an accusing finger and condemns?

We must be outraged when grace is withheld vs. 31

When his fellow servants saw what happened, they were outraged. "Greatly distressed" in our English Bible is a Greek word which means '*pain, deep emotional pain, and in some uses it refers to the pain of childbirth*'. This is no small matter - no minor infraction - right ladies!!!

They don't know what to do - the offense of un-grace and un-forgiveness is so outrageous, they go directly to the master and tell him what has happened.

"...often the church is known for its outrage toward people outside of our community who need grace rather than outrage for the people inside our community who refuse to give it." (Grace is Greater, by Kyle Idleman, p. 78)

Hebrews 12:15

“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled...”

Will un-grace and un-forgiveness in the church cause us to be outraged?

Will we ‘*raise the bar*’ of grace and forgiveness in this church - to make sure we never drift away from these essential truths and practices?

The cost of refusing to give grace vs. 32-35

Vs. 32-35 are difficult verses to hear...and difficult to interpret and apply.

Remember, this is a parable, answering Peter’s question about how many times he needs to forgive someone who sins against him. Also, it’s important we don’t read too much into a parable beyond its primary intent. This is a story - a fictional story - which teaches literal truths - but not every aspect of the parable can be taken in absolute or dogmatic ways.

We know that salvation can’t be lost - because it’s not earned in the first place - and our disobedience can’t disqualify us for the grace we’ve already received.

So... we know that Jesus isn’t describing someone who loses their salvation.

The best understanding - interpretation and application of these verses is to see them as discipline and judgment

brought by God to the believer who refuses to give grace and forgiveness.

This is not the only time Jesus teaches about this.

Matthew 6:14-15

“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

We often fail to realize that *un-grace* and *un-forgiveness* are serious sins. They give the Devil a foothold - a fulcrum in the Body of Christ. In the church - where grace and forgiveness reigns...*un-grace* and *un-forgiveness* will spread poison throughout the camp.

Here’s a very humbling...and scary truth that Jesus is saying (vs. 35). *“The litmus test for the reality of grace you have received from God is the extent to which you give grace and offer forgiveness to the person who’s hurt you the most and deserves it the least.”* (Grace is Greater, by Kyle

Idleman, p. 70)

You cannot receive God’s grace, and then refuse to give grace to others.

- If you refuse to give grace and forgiveness, did you ever receive grace and forgiveness? Do you have faith, or are you simply a religious person who attends church?

- Or, if you refuse to give grace and forgiveness, maybe you never understood the magnitude of your sin-debt, and therefore you never understood the grace and forgiveness you've received.
- If you can't be thankful for the immensity of God's grace and forgiveness in your life, then you won't be gracious or forgiving to others!

Here's the point...remember Jesus is answering Peter's question. If you don't forgive your brother/sister, you are committing a major offense - a heinous sin - and God will not stand by and let that happen.

But giving grace and forgiving someone who has hurt us so deeply can feel like an impossible thing...it can feel so unfair. It lets them 'off the hook' - and that's the last thing you want to do!

You're right in one sense...it is unfair!

Grace is unfair.

It's unfair that Jesus paid the price for your sins.

It's unfair that you receive what you did not earn.

It's unfair to let go of the anger you feel toward someone who has done you wrong.

But grace is unfair.

But grace is the only way to wholeness and health.

Grace is the only way to heal from the pain.

If you refuse to give grace, then your heart will be filled with bitterness and anger - and they will metastasize to your soul!

1 Peter 4:8

“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”

Matthew 5:7

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

Matthew 6:12

“...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

In the last words of **vs. 35**, Jesus says our forgiveness must be “from your heart”.

It should be sincere, not something we do out of obligation or mechanical compliance.

The only way to forgive from your heart is to understand the vast number of sins which God has forgiven in your life, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, your heart takes on the compassion of Christ.

A thankful heart for the grace and forgiveness you have received in your life, leads to a heart that is willing to give grace and forgive the person who sins against you.

Apply it...

Give thanks for the outrageous grace and forgiveness of God.

If you've never put your faith in Christ, then:

Admit your sins...

Believe in Jesus as your Savior...

Commit each day to Christ!

If you're already a Christian, then give thanks always - continually - for the gift of salvation you've received in Jesus Christ.

Give grace and forgiveness to others

Give to others as you've received.

Allow God's grace in your life, to flow out of you to others.

Grace is a powerful reality and truth of the Gospel...it will change hearts and lives!

Be outraged at un-grace and un-forgiveness in the church

We should be saddened at the abundance of sin we see on the news every night, but we must be outraged when the people of God refuse to give grace and forgiveness.

We must stop pointing accusing fingers, and keep our arms open wide as we extend God's grace and forgiveness to a world so desperate for these things!

Close in prayer