

The Parables of Jesus: Forgiveness - Text: Matthew 18:21-35

Main Idea: Because God has forgiven us an impossible debt in Christ, his people must practice real forgiveness from the heart. Forgiveness is commanded by Jesus, it is a gift for our good, and it rests on trusting God to make things right.

Point 1: Understand your sin debt and the price Jesus paid

Explanation: Peter asks for a limit. Jesus removes the limit. The parable shows a servant forgiven an unpayable debt who then refuses a small one. That is what it looks like when forgiven people withhold forgiveness. Our sin before a holy God was beyond our ability to repay. At the cross Jesus paid it in full.

Truth: The more clearly I see my own forgiven debt, the more freely I forgive others.

Point 2: Believe that God's commands bring good

Explanation: Jesus commands forgiveness for our obedience and for our health.

Forgiveness is freedom. It does not excuse evil. It does not require reconciliation or contact. It chooses to release vengeance and refuse bitterness. Jesus calls us to forgive because he loves us.

Truth: Forgiveness is not punishment. Forgiveness is a gift that sets my soul free.

Point 3: Trust God to make things right

Explanation: Scripture calls us to leave room for God's wrath. He sees. He judges justly. He is not turning a blind eye to evil. We forgive and live at peace as far as it depends on us while we entrust justice to the Father.

Truth: I can forgive because my Father is faithful and just. He will repay rightly.

What forgiveness is and is not:

Forgiveness is a decision to release a debt to God.

Forgiveness is often practiced repeatedly as wounds resurface.

Forgiveness is not saying it was okay.

Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation or trust.

Reflection

Jesus forgave me at infinite cost to himself. That grace now shapes my life. Lord, help me to see my debt, receive your mercy, and extend the same. Help me to walk in the freedom of forgiveness and to trust you with justice. Amen.

Devotion 1 – See Your Debt Clearly

Scripture: *Matthew 18:32–33* – “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’”

Reflection: Jesus tells us plainly that the way we treat others after being forgiven shows what we truly believe about his grace. When we minimize our sin, we naturally struggle to forgive others. But when we grasp the weight of our sin and the infinite price Jesus paid on the cross, forgiveness becomes a response of gratitude rather than a forced duty.

Challenge: Spend five minutes today confessing your sin before God. Name it honestly. Then thank him for the cross. Let that gratitude soften your heart toward someone you are tempted to hold a grudge against.

Devotion 2 – Forgiveness Is Freedom

Scripture: *Mark 11:25* – “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

Reflection: Forgiveness does not mean what was done was okay. It does not mean you must restore a broken relationship. Forgiveness means you are choosing freedom instead of bitterness. Holding onto anger drains the body and poisons the mind, but releasing it into God’s hands brings healing. Jesus commands forgiveness not to punish us but to give us peace.

Challenge: Write down the name of someone you need to forgive. Pray, “Lord, I release this burden to you. I do not excuse what happened, but I will not carry it any longer. Set me free.” Repeat that prayer daily until God lifts the weight.

Devotion 3 – Trust God to Make Things Right

Scripture: *Romans 12:19* – “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

Reflection: Forgiveness is not pretending evil never happened. It is placing justice into God’s hands. Our Father is faithful, and he sees what we cannot. He will judge rightly in his time. We are free to forgive because we trust his promise to set all things right.

Challenge: When old anger rises, whisper a prayer: “Father, I trust you. You see what I cannot. You will handle this better than I ever could.” Release your desire for revenge into his hands and walk forward in peace.