

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: 7 Deadly Sins of Suburbia
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Anger From Unforgiveness

Matthew 18

Morning church! It's great to be with you, diving into God's word this morning. I'll start by telling you, one of the most memorable mission trips I've been on was to the Amazon. So, the way that this goes down is you fly to Manaus, Brazil, and you get on a boat - with some young adults and some doctors - and you go down the Amazon River on that boat for six days. You get off in villages and share the gospel with people there.

So, the way that it starts is we all gather there at the airport. It's myself and a couple other leaders and then people going on the trips. And I told them clearly. I said, "Hey, you're going to have to pack for seven days in one suitcase. That suitcase has to be less than 50 pounds. Before you leave the house, make sure it's less than 50 pounds.

So, we're there and we're putting our luggage on the scale. It is kind of one person after the other and I'm just overseeing. They are checking the bags and put it on the conveyor belt. And there is this one young lady, and she brings her suitcase, which I thought was a little oversized, but she throws it on the scale and it's 54 pounds. And I'm just like, "Come on like what?" I said, "Don't do this. What is in there?" So, we do that suitcase shuffle, that I'm sure some of you have done, where we pull it off the scale and we unzip it, and we open it up. Then I'm like, "What are these platform shoes? You don't need these in Brazil! Your blow dryer? We don't need a blow dryer." And we're trying to make it less than 54 pounds and as we did, I pulled out this. (JP is holding a bag of large stones.) It's a bag of rocks. Which is confusing on a number of levels.

I'm like, "What in the world?" And I look at her and I'm like, "What? Why are you bringing a bag of rocks? You don't have to take rocks to Brazil. They have rocks there." I mean, I'm trying to figure out like, what this could possibly be? I'm thinking, are they pet rocks? I just don't understand. And she's kind of embarrassed, you know, looking around and is like, "Hey, I'll tell you later, but I got to take them."

I can't even begin to fill in the blank. I'm like, OK, what could be a logical explanation? And I'm there and I'm pulling them out - maybe they are some kind of special rock. But nope, that's just a rock. There it is. Nothing, nothing to be done with that. And I'm just trying... I'm like, "Are you serious? Well can we leave any of the rocks?" So, when it was appropriate, she pulled me aside and just said, "I'm going through this Bible study and we're learning about forgiveness. We had to make a list of people that we haven't forgiven and until we're ready to forgive them, we have to carry these rocks around." I thought what a powerful image of the weight of unforgiveness. What it does and how it sits on us. How it weighs us down.

I have been surprised in biblical counseling, through the years, how I will meet with somebody, and they are committed to taking pain with them from town to town, apartment to apartment, house to house, relationship to relationship. They're like, "No, that thing. No, no, that I reserve the right to stay angry at that. I won't be forgiving that." And they just carry that weight around with them on their shoulders. It is not like you win. It's not like you get the upper hand.

And so, we're in this series, The Seven Deadly Sins of Suburbia. Week one - we talked about busyness, Mary, and Martha. Week 2 - we talked about entitlement. How these are sins that may not cause you a literal death but will kill your faith. We talked about apathy. In the last two weeks, Nate's done a great job addressing the sin of comparison and the sin of gossip. And so today I want to talk about anger.

The scripture talks about a righteous anger, so anger is not enough of a word to really define the topic at hand - the sin. In Scripture it says in your anger, do not sin. Which means it's possible to be angry and not sin. So, we're talking about the anger that comes from unforgiveness. The anger that is rooted in a wrath that you feel towards somebody when you do not forgive them. So, I want you to begin to think about people who have wronged you. These are the people that you - and I know you're a believer, I know you walk with Jesus - but these are the people that you fantasize revenge with. You think about getting back to them. Maybe it's a business deal gone wrong. Maybe it's betrayal of the deepest kind. Maybe it was a parent or family member that wronged you. Maybe it's roommate drama that you've carried with. Maybe someone said something about you and when you think about that, you get red in the face and your heart begins to race. And you realize, Oh, I'm carrying this weight with me. I'm carrying this with me.

We're all carrying rocks this morning. Maybe it was something recent. Maybe it's something from way back when. It's been well said that unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die. But it turns out, when you look at medical research of today, it really is like drinking poison. In fact, this is what everydayhealth.com says happens when you stay angry. It says:

- anger can cause damage to your heart
- anger increases your risk of a stroke
- anger weakens your immune system
- anger increases anxiety and stress
- anger is linked to depression

It literally damages your lungs and respiratory health. People who are habitually angry are sick more often. Anger shortens your life.

I want to compare that list with one that the Mayo Clinic put together on the benefits - of what God, through Jesus Christ calls us to - the benefits of forgiveness. It says those who have forgiven have:

- improved health and peace of mind
- leads to healthier relationships
- improved mental health

- less anxiety, stress, and hostility
- lower blood pressure
- fewer symptoms of depression
- a stronger immune system
- improved heart health
- improved self-esteem

And I think so many of us, by our personality, we think that anger is a tool. It's a method to display our strength. And there's permission. What's interesting about these sins, is they are the sins that we cohabitate with. The sins that we say, "Well, that just marks me. That is just kind of who I am."

I remember when we were considering a move to Waco, and we attended a basketball game. Baylor basketball game. Baylor Baptist University basketball. I sat there with my kids there. This is great man. In Waco with a bunch of Christians. You know? And the ref made what was perceived to be a wrong call against Baylor and all of the sudden my children began to learn words. And I was like, oh – earmuffs. You know? Like, "Excuse me sir...the kids are right here. Oh, ok you too. Oh man, you guys are some angry Baptist." And everyone just began to shout and were red in the face and spit coming out of their mouths - like they're preaching a sermon. And I'm just like, "Oh my goodness. What just happened? Who are we?" There are these things that we just give ourselves permission to go to. It's not a tool. It's not something that we use to get something we want. So, I'm going to be in Matthew 18 if you want to turn there.

As I move through this chapter, we're going to look at how God dealt with His anger. What kind of people forgive? And what our forgiveness does. Matthew 18, if that sounds familiar it is the church discipline chapter. It is how we treat someone in sin, and it instructs us, you know, spoiler alert to go and tell them. And if they don't listen, then we take someone with us. And if they don't listen yet again, we bring it to the church and the church begins to help that person understand the Gospel. We assume that they are not walking with Jesus. Then Peter asked the question, 'Well, how many times are we supposed to forgive Jesus? And Jesus answers and then He goes into a story. A parable, a story that's told to illustrate a point. So, I'm going to read this story that Jesus told, and we'll have to ask the question, what was the purpose of Him telling that story then? And what is the purpose of Him telling that story now?

Verse 21, **Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times? Now - he says up to seven times because it was rabbinic tradition that you would forgive someone 3 times. Three strikes and you are out. I'll forgive you once, shame on you. Twice, shame on me. You know, whatever the shames are - you got three times. So, Peter takes that, and he doubles it, and he throws another one on for good measure. Like, look at me! I'm doing what you're teaching us.**

Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Or seventy times seven times, there's a discrepancy here between the Hebrew and the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament Bible. One says seventy-seven times, one says seventy times seven. The reason there's a discrepancy is because it comes from Genesis 4 where Lamech is talking about Cain and how

Cain was forgiven, avenged against what he's done. And what you need to know is the numbers are irrelevant. Jesus is not instructing you to forgive 490 times. He's saying this in exaggeration to say a countless amount of times. Not seven times Peter. Not just what they taught you, times two + 1, but you are to continually forgive.

And then He tells this story. And he doesn't, it's really brilliant, it's not how to forgive - it's why you forgive. If you understand the why, you'll get the how. In this brilliant teaching of Jesus. **“Therefore, the Kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement... So, there's a king. He's got some servants. They owe him some money. ...a man who owed him 10,000 talents was brought to him. Since this man was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.** That escalated quickly! Sell your family and your kids and then maybe we'll see what we're working with. 10,000 talents, the amount he owes, is the equivalent of 150,000 YEARS' worth of wages. And so, if we're talking about an annual salary of \$30,000. That's four billion, five-hundred million dollars that he owes. If we're talking about an annual salary of \$60,000 - he owes \$9 billion. It's an impossible amount! It is a debt so big that he will never be able to repay it. In this story, the King or the master is God. The servant is us. The loss of his family is the loss of everything that we love, and the debt is our sin. This is the story that Jesus is telling.

Verse 26, **“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ And the servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go.** What?? Not sure if you're tracking because nobody's jaw is on the floor right now. This guy says, “Oh, you owe me \$4 billion. Here's what we're going to do - take your wife and sell her. Take your children and sell them. Everything that matters to you, give it to me and they are going to go away!” And then the guy just falls to his knees and says, “I'm so sorry” “Oh. You are sorry? Oh ok, you're fine. See ya when I see ya!” What??

1. God's anger toward you was satisfied.

The debt was cancelled. Every debt against God, it hindered our relationship with Him. Every single action that you've taken, word that you've spoken, or thought that you had that was not glorifying to Him, put a weight between you and Him. Every single thing that you've done that was not done in faith is sin. That's what Romans 14 tells us - anything not done in faith is sin. And it puts a weight between you and God. Our sin against God, it's so much more than \$4 billion. It is more than we can imagine, our sin is against the Holy God. You will sin more against God today than any single person will sin against you in your entire lifetime. That's important. I hope you're arguing with me in your head right now. You will sin more against God today than any single person will sin against you in your entire lifetime.

And who the sin is against matters. David, when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed said, ‘against you alone Oh Lord have I sinned.’ Our sins, every sin that we commit, is against a holy God. And who the sin is against matters. We were driving down the road one day, and my daughter said, “Is it illegal to walk on someone else’s yard? Is it illegal to walk on someone else’s yard?” I said, “Yeah, it's trespassing.” And she said, “So if somebody

walks on our yard, they go to prison?” “Eh...probably not. Probably not going to send them to prison, you know. If they walk on our yard, we will probably walk out there, maybe invite them in for dinner. I don't know what we're going to do, but I don't think we're going to call the police immediately, you know?” And she said, “OK.” And she's just kind of wrestling. “So, nobody who walks on someone else's yard goes to prison?” I said, “Well, it depends on whose yard you're walking on. Like if you climb the fence of the White House and you just kind of run up to the door, you're going to get shot dead.” See who the sin is against really matters. You understand? It's not all the same. You lie to me, and I might express a hurt to you. “Hey, I wish you wouldn't have lied to me.” You lie to a judge and it's perjury and up to five years in prison. Who you commit a sin against matters! Our sin is not against a judge. It's not against the President of the United States of America. Our sin is against a holy, perfect, almighty, sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, powerful God. Our sin is against Him, and our sin is bigger than we can imagine. And it costs us more than we can pay.

And if we don't think... If you're sitting there and you're wrestling, and you're like, “Well, I don't think I'm that big of a sinner.” Then why did God allow His son to die for you? If you're not that big of a sinner, then why would God...? I've got a son. I love him. I love you guys. I don't want my son to die for you. And the reality is God despises our sin. He is so angry at our sin. And somehow in this crazy act of what we believe all of His anger and all of His wrath at your sin was targeted at His son and He was crushed for our transgressions. That's what the prophet Isaiah writes in 53:10, God was pleased to crush Him.

Now why would God be pleased to crush His son? Because it allows Him to forgive you. It allows Him to have a right relationship with you, not holding your sins against you. Your sin against that Holy God is greater than you can ever imagine, and His grace overwhelms that situation. Making His forgiveness even greater than your sin. Psalm 103:12 says that He has removed your sin as far as the East is from the West. Which is interesting if you look at a globe. If you go North to South, eventually if you keep going North, you're going to go South again. But if you go East, you're going to keep going East. You go West, you're going to keep going West. So as far as the East is from the West is an immeasurable length and that's what He's done with your sin. He wipes away your debt. Listen to this. For fun. For fun. It's what delights Him.

I don't know what you do for fun. Maybe you go wakeboarding or hit the lake house, or you go shopping for fun. What God does for fun is He shows you mercy. Micah 7:18, **Who is God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgressions of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.**

Matthew 18:28, **“But when the servant went out... So, the servant now leaves the master, the one who's been forgiven. He found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii. So not 150,000 years' worth of wages, 100 denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him, “Pay back what you owe me!” He demanded. His fellow servant fell on his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ but he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened... So, the master's servants observed this take place. This man has been forgiven. Goes and finds someone, chokes him, has him thrown into prison. When they see this,**

they are confused. **When the servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.**

So, he owes him 100 days wages, not 150,000 years' worth of wages. And so, he grabs him by the throat, and he chokes him, and he throws him into prison and everyone who sees this is confused. They are like, "Wait, wait. Hold on. I thought you were the one that was forgiven much. I'm so confused by your inability to forgive."

2. *Forgiven people are forgiving people.*

Forgiven people are forgiving people. I guess at some point in this journey, we have lost sight of what God has done for us. We've lost sight of grace. How He's taking our sin and not giving us what we deserve but giving us infinitely more than we could ever deserve. And that that's what we represent in the world that we go in. Now let me make some distinctions here. Forgiveness is not forgetting. You can't forget, absent of a lobotomy, absent of a brain surgery, or us removing part of the brain. Apart from that you can't forget. It is scientifically, biologically impossible to forget something by effort. Forgiveness is not letting someone continue to hurt you. Forgiveness does not even mean restoring the relationship to what it was. If there's repentance there, if there's genuine repentance there, you can restore the relationship. That's what we see in the scriptures. Matthew 18 even gives us that process prior to this reading. But if there's not repentance there you say, "Hey, I'm not going to act out of the revenge that I feel towards you." And forgiveness does not mean that there's no consequences. Forgiveness means you forfeit your right to carry bitterness with you throughout your life. Forgiveness impacts you much more than it impacts them. It is for your benefit even more than their benefit. There's mutual benefit there, don't get me wrong. Forgiveness is not flippantly blowing off the wrong. Forgiveness is this if there's any mystery or confusion. It's taking a real and true account... So, what the transgression has cost you – emotionally, and forfeiting your right toward revenge in that.

Monica and I were on a date night. Date nights are fun. Going to dinner. She and I are driving down the road. All is right in the world; we are going down just a little two-lane road. 10 and 2, speed limit, seat belt on. And there is a car that is going to turn in front of us – there is a turning lane ahead. And there is a car that is going to turn the opposite way. And so, this car cannot see us just safely traveling the speed limit down our road. And they turn right in front of us. When they turn right in front of us, I hit them broadside, damaged their car, damaged my truck. We just both pulled into the parking lot. She was really upset. She got out of the car, and she was on the phone. I kind of rolled down the window to try to make sure that she was OK, but she was she was shouting, "He came out of nowhere! He came out of nowhere this (expletive) came out of nowhere!" And I was like not really nowhere. I came from my house, driving down the road safely - the speed limit. When you turned right in front of me, and she just was really like dramatic and lots of shouting. So, I was like, "Hey, are you OK?" And she didn't want to have that conversation, so I rolled back up the window. I called the police. Let them know. "Hey, here's what happened." I call my insurance company.

And so, I'm on the phone with my insurance company when the person that she was talking to showed up. OK? It was her boyfriend, and he was a very theatrical character. I mean, I thought

she was. But somehow, in all of the world, these two found each other. He literally, he looked at the damage to the car and fell over backwards on the ground. Just shouting and hitting the ground with his fists. It was just amazing. I was just like this is wow! He's shouting and saying all of these words and things. Then he comes to my window, and he says, (JP is shouting) "Get the "F" out of the truck." I was like, "I got to go." I opened the car door. I was like, "Hey, I'm not going anywhere, buddy. What's going on?" He is like, "This is my parent's car. My girlfriend was driving my parent's car - they didn't know it." I was like, "They're going to find out." You know? He was like, "You hit her!" I am like, "She turned in front of me." And he just was just erratic.

I said, "Let me ask you a question. Do you have a faith?" He said, "Yeah, I'm Christian." I said, "That's confusing. I'm confused now." And as we began to talk, I just told him the story. I said, "Here's what was going on. I want you to know exactly what happened. OK? We were driving down the road and she turned right there." He goes, "Well, it doesn't matter whose fault it is." "That's not true, it kind of does matter whose fault it is. Because here's why... Your car is damaged, and my truck is damaged. Somebody's got to pay for this." Right? You have to pay for it, or I have to pay for it. But what happens is the insurance company comes in as a mediator. They come and they pay for the damage, right? Christ is called the mediator. He's the go between. He came in and He paid for the damage that was caused.

As you look at how He's paid, undeservingly, for the damage that you've caused it allows you the grace that you've received that you can extend it to others. The illustration is not perfect because it would be like the insurance company knows that you're going to continue to get in wrecks and they're like, "Hey, we want you. Come on, our team. You know? We're just going to keep paying for it." Ephesians 4:32 says, **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

So, let's go back into the story. **The master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled 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?" In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my Heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.** So, the servants tell the master. "Hey, that guy you forgave, and you wrote off his debt. He went out and choked somebody because they owed him some money." That's confusing. Bring him here. "Hey, I'm going to send you to the jailers to be tortured." The Greek is literally 'give him to the torturers. Doesn't sound fun... Until he can pay me back, which is forever. This is a clear allusion to hell. OK? This is what he's talking about. He's going to go to a place of suffering for his entire life, or as we know, eternity. He's not able to pay that debt back.

The only thing you can do in hell is pay for your sins forever. And the only person who doesn't go to hell is the person whose sins have been paid for. God set down the payment, you pick it up and trust in it. That it covers the bill for the things that you've done.

So, this is why our anger is so confusing to people. That we say that we're forgiven, but we don't act like forgiven people. We want to choke someone or seek revenge. We want them to suffer for

the same things that we've done, and it confuses a watching world. Then it belittles the gospel. But there's an interpretive challenge in this text. In verse 35 it says, ...**this is how my Heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.** Right? Forgiven people are forgiving people. Unforgiven people are unforgiving people.

Now I heard a pastor teach this once because I listen to lots of messages and want to make sure that I handle the text appropriately. I read lots of commentaries trying to understand what's going on here. And the pastor just said, "Hey, you know, this is a confusing text. He's certainly not saying that if you can't forgive others, you're not forgiven. We should always take confusing texts and explain them with other texts in the Bible. We should bring in other texts." So let me just read some other texts so that we have clarity on what this is saying because it is confusing.

- Matthew 6:14 he says, **For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your father will not forgive your sins.**
- Mark 11:25 - **And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.**
- Colossians 3:13 - **Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**
- Luke 6:35-37 - **But love your enemies. Do good to them. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.**

I'm not teaching works-based salvation. I'm not saying forgive so that you can be saved. I am saying those who rightfully understand the forgiveness that they have received are able, as a result to that right understanding, to forgive others. This is clearly taught in the scripture. How do I forgive them? You look deeply into how you've been forgiven. How do I forgive myself? You can't forgive yourself. You didn't sin against yourself. You didn't create a debt against yourself. Forgiveness, wrongdoings, sins are committed against other people and first and foremost a holy God. When you're talking about forgiving yourself, you're talking about shame. Shame is of the enemy; conviction is of the Holy Spirit. Conviction causes you to change your actions - to go and sin no more, if you will. Our forgiveness of others is evidence of a right understanding of God's forgiveness of us.

3. Your forgiveness demonstrates God's forgiveness.

Your forgiveness demonstrates God's forgiveness. It's quite possibly the greatest apologetic that you have as you share the gospel. To start with, all that you've been forgiven for. This is the self-righteousness that I grew up in. This is where I thought, you know, my works would get me there. Friend, these are the things that I did before I knew Jesus. These are things I've done since I've known Jesus that should confuse you because it's me acting in hypocrisy. They are not consistent with the faith that I say that I have. You're free to walk in the light. You're free to be known. You're free to walk without shame, knowing that your sin has been paid for. This is powerful.

Ali, my friend, she got this about mid trip in Brazil through different stories and teachings. We were parked on the shore; the boat was tied up on the shore. I watched the light bulb just go up and she took her bag of rocks, and she went up there. On the top of that boat, there in the Amazon River, she just she grabbed a rock and just threw it. Just launched it. I could see her silhouette as the sun was setting behind her, just her by herself on the top of that boat. I don't know what was going through her head, but she just threw those rocks. Forgiven - one after the other. Just grabbing this weight she'd been carrying around. Forgiven. She got it.

She came down off that boat and I was sitting on the shore. She came up. She just said, "Hey, would you baptize me in this water? I want to follow Jesus. I don't want to carry bitterness with me. Would you baptize me?"

So, in summary - God's anger against your sin was satisfied on Jesus. As forgiven people we are forgiving people. Our forgiveness demonstrates God's forgiveness. Some of you, you are here this morning, and you are carrying big rocks. And you scoff, your heart scoffs at the notion of a car wreck and damage to a vehicle. And you're trying to figure out how you forgive them.

There's this story in John 8 where this woman is caught in adultery. It was the law then, that if someone is caught in adultery you could just take matters into your own hands. Martial law - you could pick up rocks and you could gather around them, and you could just start throwing these at them till they fall. When they collapse on the ground, you get over them and just keep throwing at them until their heart stops beating. Then you carry their body out and you throw them away with the trash. That's what would happen. That was commonplace in this day and age.

So, there they are and this woman - she's standing there surrounded by a bunch of grown men holding rocks. They say to Jesus, "Rabbi, we're going to do what Moses told us we could do. We're going to deal with this. Right here and right now." Jesus is sitting there drawing something in the sand. They are like, "We're going to do it." Jesus is like, "Yeah. Alright. OK. OK. Yeah. Got your rocks. Here you are - she has been caught in adultery. She is a threat to our community. OK. Ok. You know, let's just do this in orderly fashion. Whichever one of you hasn't sinned, why don't you go first? You Start us off. You get us going. OK? Whichever one of you hasn't done anything wrong. Why don't you take the lead?" I could imagine sitting there and you start looking around. "Is it you Frank? Who is going to go?"

The text says those who are older begin to leave first. Then the younger ones. Those who've been around awhile, they knew, 'I got no foot to stand on. I've done some things.' Young in the faith, 'they are still like, well, maybe I have not done anything.' And then they realize, 'Oh, yeah. I've done some things.'

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." And there's your application.

Let me pray for us. Father, help us do that. We need your help. I pray that you would just continue to protect us from the enemy. Use us. According to your will restore us and guide us.

Strengthen us, lead us, convict us. Give us courage to walk in righteousness and give us courage to forgive those who have hurt us. We thank you for the ways you've blessed us here. Thank you for the ways you've protected us here. I pray that you would continue to bless us and protect us here. Fill our hearts with grace even as we sing. In Jesus name. Amen.