

## Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

This week we look at forgiveness through Matthew 18: 21-35. Peter asks how many times he must forgive someone. He then tells a parable about a slave who does not pass on his master's forgiveness and we are challenged to see ourselves as channels of God's mercy. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

### Call to worship

Come to the God who knows us,  
to the God who created our being,  
to the God who knows our frailty,  
to the God who loves and cherishes us beyond measure.  
Come as you are and worship God.

### A prayer of confession

Gracious God,  
where you have been merciful, we have been mean;  
where you have been generous, we have been grudging;  
where you have been forgiving, we have been hard-hearted.

***We are ashamed and turn to you now,  
trusting in your compassion and longing to begin again  
in the name, and following the example, of Jesus Christ.  
Amen.***

***Our Father .....***

**Song            Jesus we celebrate your victory (Hillsong)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woMdGbWnAkk&t=25s>

### **Matthew 18:21-35 - The parable of the Unmerciful Servant**

<sup>21</sup> 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?'

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>23</sup> 'Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold<sup>[b]</sup> was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he 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.

<sup>26</sup> 'At this the servant fell on his knees before him. "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." <sup>27</sup> The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.



<sup>28</sup> 'But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.<sup>[c]</sup> He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded.

<sup>29</sup> 'His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back."

<sup>30</sup> 'But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup> 'Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" <sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

<sup>35</sup> 'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.' (NIVUK)

### **Forgiveness – Matthew 18: 21-35**

Jesus said in the Lord's Prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Forgiveness is important and challenging. Forgiveness for ourselves because of the idea expressed in this version of the Lord's Prayer that sin is most focussed as debt in the Bible. From the first chapters of Genesis there is the idea that we have squandered God's image through sin. God is merciful and slow to anger – by His mercy we are forgiven. Jesus has made a once and for all sacrifice for our sins – we receive forgiveness by grace. The second part of the Lord's Prayer phrase is an injunction therefore to forgive others. This can be hard and is often a process.

In this passage Peter thinks he is going to be praised by Jesus for suggesting he forgive seven times (the Pharisees teaching was three times) but Jesus lays down the challenge of forgiveness – seventy-seven or seventy times seven depending on your translation. In other words, the need to forgive will be with us for our lives and we shall need to be consistent so that we know the wholeness and healing that comes from forgiveness. That is why Jesus tells this parable of the unmerciful servant.

Looking at this from a personal spiritual perspective I have identified five questions.

**When must I forgive?** – When I have been hurt by someone else. This may not be an easy matter. Sometimes, even though we might not like to admit it we can find it easier being angry, bitter, critical or aggressive. But just as you squeeze an orange to get sweet juice from it or crush lavender to get the full fragrance so we can let go of the various pains and hurts in our lives and relationships if we can forgive and bring forth the sweetness and fragrance of Jesus in our lives.

So **how many times must I forgive?** – well here is a challenge because Jesus says indefinitely – it will be a process throughout our lives as we encounter different situations. Jesus knows our human nature and he presents this parable to us so that we are encouraged to forgive

and keep on doing so when necessary so that troublesome emotions like bitterness and resentment do not get a hold in our hearts and cause problems in relationships

**Why must I forgive?** – Because Jesus has forgiven me a million times more than I shall have to forgive anyone else. This is the point of the parable. The unmerciful servant has been forgiven a huge debt that he could not possibly pay then in the next breath refuses to forgive someone else a tiny debt in comparison. We need to look at the Cross and what it cost God through his Son, Jesus Christ in order for any of us to be forgiven. God laid upon himself the sin and guilt of us all so that we might be released from that debt.

**What happens if I don't forgive?** - I have heard it expressed like this – I lock myself in the prison of my own unforgiveness. When Jesus took all of our sins upon himself on the cross he not only unlocked the prison doors that you and I might know the love and forgiveness of God forever but also he set us free to love and forgive others; to put relationships right, free to know healing & reconciliation and free to be peacemakers. If we don't forgive and hold on to bitterness for example, we often do not hurt the person we are bitter about but we simply lose peace ourselves.

So lastly, **what must I do about it?** - Pray and act! Be prepared to take the initiative. Be quick to admit our own faults. Be prepared to say I was rude or angry or selfish. We need to be strong in the Lord to do this and have our relationship with him straight. As Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone."

Here are prayers that might be helpful focussing on being forgiven and forgiving others.

### **Receiving Forgiveness**

Lord Jesus Christ, I know I have sinned, I need your forgiveness.

Thank you for dying on the cross to bear all my sin upon yourself.

I am willing to let go all the wrong in my life with your help. I want you to be first in my life.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, I ask you afresh into my life - I ask you in by your Spirit.

Come in to be my Saviour, Lord and Friend forever.

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

### **Forgiving Others**

Dear Father, I thank you that you love me and accept me in Jesus Christ; release me from all sin. Please forgive me when I am not forgiving - when I am angry and do not let go.

When I know something is not right hear me when I ask for help. Give me your grace.

Father I need your love in my heart every day to love others as I should.

Fill me with your Holy Spirit. Fill me with your love.

Pour love into my heart every day that I may love you and most of all to serve Jesus Christ; to love and serve others. **Amen.**

### **Song You laid aside your majesty (Noel Richards)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxXrV-0JqoI>

### **HOLY COMMUNION Thanksgiving: Forgiveness – Matthew 18: 21-35**

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.

You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.  
You gave us the words of your prophets, the stories of your people through the generations,  
and the gathered wisdom of many years.  
You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up in difficult times when there was  
little peace. He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.

He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.  
He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.  
For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.  
And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.  
You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us, to remind us of Jesus Christ,  
and to make us one in him.

For all these gifts we thank you, and we join with all your people on earth and in heaven,  
in joyful praise: **Hosanna!**

### **The Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Wine**

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.  
I Corinthians 5:7

### **The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine**

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.  
Blessed are those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Alleluia.*

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for all, for the  
forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

### **Prayer after Communion**

God of a love stronger than death, you have given us new birth into a living hope  
through the gift of your Son.  
God with us, you have fed us with yourself and strengthened us for journeying ahead.  
God of truth and power, you take our weakness and our sin and refashion us by grace.  
Gracious God, may the love which bids us welcome at this table gather all your children into  
one, in your eternal presence, whole and free at last. **Amen**

### **A sending out prayer**

Eternal God,  
slow to anger and swift to forgive,  
fill our lives with the loving energy  
of your compassionate Spirit,  
that we may do justly, love mercy  
and walk humbly with you, our God.  
**Amen.**



