



-- Read Luke 11:1-4

-- Pray

-- Review

--Last Week – “Forgive us our sins”

-- Main Idea: Pray repentantly, as a sinner to his Savior.

-- Recognize your malady.

-- There is nothing you or I or anyone else needs more than we need forgiveness from God.

-- Christ, and Christ alone, can soothe the guilty soul.

-- Repent meaningfully.

-- Turn away from sin and toward Jesus Christ.

-- Receive God’s mercy.

-- The pinnacle of mercy is the cross of Christ.

-- **Read Matthew 6:9-15**

1.) Forgiveness is a choice.

-- We are not saved because we forgive others, but if we truly are forgiven we will be people who are growing in our desire and capacity to forgive.

-- Because we have been forgiven in Christ, you and I ought to be the most forgiving people we know.

-- Definition of Forgiveness: Forgiveness is a decision, an act of one’s will, *a choice* to release a person from the obligation that resulted when they injured me.

-- Illustration – (Ask for a wallet and pocket the money).

-- I now owe a debt. You can fester upon it or forgive it

- Forgiveness means “I will treat you as if the wrong never happened and that I will not bring this up again except for your good.
- Forgiveness is both a moment and a process.
 - It is a decision made in a moment but lived out over a lifetime.
 - More than 350 years ago, the great Puritan theologian Thomas Watson provided seven elements of genuine forgiveness:
 - (1) Resisting revenge (2) Not returning evil for evil (3) Wishing them well (4) Grieving at their calamities (5) Praying for their welfare (6) Seeking reconciliation so far as it depends on you (7) Coming to their aid in distress

-- Read Matthew 18:21-35.

- v. 21-22
 - Peter seems to be stuck on v. 15, perhaps thinking, “Oh, that annoying brother of mine! How many times do I have to forgive that louse?”
 - According to the religious standard of the day, righteousness required forgiving a person as many as three times. Thus, it is likely that Peter expected Jesus to praise him for his suggestion of seven.
 - Jesus says “Seventy-seven” or “Seventy times Seven”, which really means, “Stop counting.”
- In this world marred by sin and filled with sinners, forgiveness of others must be our never-ending choice.

2.) Forgiveness is a consequence of salvation.

- In other words, we who sincerely receive forgiveness in Christ will increasingly become forgiving people.
- v. 24
 - One talent is equivalent to almost 20 years’ wages.
 - At a wage of \$50k/year, 10,000 talents would be about \$10 bil.
 - That is more than the total income of about 60% of the countries in the world.
 - Clearly, Jesus is indicating that the man’s debt was completely unpayable.
- The bigger picture of the parable:
 - God is the King.
 - The man with the lesser debt is the person who sins against us.

- The servant with the unpayable debt is you and me.
- Do we recognize our utter depravity today? Do we understand that we simply cannot ever, by any measure whatsoever, come anywhere close to repaying the debt we owe to God because of our many sins?
- John Piper – “We do more dishonor to God in one day than everyone else does to us in a lifetime.”
- Yet, through sincere faith in Jesus Christ, God, like the king in the parable, wipes out our debt entirely.
- Are you blown away by God’s forgiveness today? Has your heart been radically re-formed and re-formatted by the forgiveness God poured out in Christ?
- Main point:
 - Anyone who really understands the mercy we have received in Christ will (not perfectly, but increasingly) be a forgiving person.
 - In other words, anyone who has received God’s magnificently merciful forgiveness through faith in Christ will necessarily be a person who is growing in the desire and ability to forgive others.
 - If God’s forgiveness is in you, then it ought to be pouring forth from you as well.

3.) Unforgiveness is a cancer of the spirit.

- Bitterness is a suffocating spiritual cancer.
 - As it is with cancer, so it is with bitterness: It breeds upon itself.
 - As it is with cancer, so it is with bitterness: Time will not heal it. Time will only allow it to grow and consume more of our lives.
 - As it is with cancer, so it is with bitterness: The bigger and more widespread the disease, the more desperate we should be to cut it out of our lives.
 - It makes no sense to say, “The hurt is too big; I cannot let it go.”
 - It makes much more sense to say, “The burden is too big, I cannot carry it any longer.”
 - 1 Peter 5:7 – “*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*”
 - Never defend your unforgiveness again. There is no more sanity on defending unforgiveness than there is in congratulating cancer.
- Matthew 18:28-35
 - v. 28 – 100 Denarii:

- 1 denarius = 1 day's wage, so 100 denarii = 100 day's wages
- This is approximately 1/3 year's wages, or roughly \$20,000.
- This is not insignificant, but it is not even a fraction of the debt that the unforgiving servant owed to the king.
- Similarly, the hurts that others have caused us is not at all insignificant, but they pale in comparison to the offenses we have committed against our holy God.
- Unforgiveness destroys lives.
 - a.) Unforgiveness destroys the other person or people.
 - v. 28-30 – The man he choked was thrown in prison.
 - b.) Unforgiveness destroys uninvolved bystanders (e.g. friends).
 - v. 31 – The other servants were “greatly distressed.”
 - If you think your bitterness affects only you, think again.
 - c.) Unforgiveness destroys our chance to know and love God.
 - v. 32-33 – What could have been a blessed association with the king is completely severed.
 - d.) Unforgiveness destroys the unforgiving.
 - v. 34-35 – The unforgiving servant is tortured forever, because there is no way he could ever repay his debt.
 - Do we realize from these verses how dreadfully serious God is about the manner in which we forgive others?
 - Because our entire relationship with God is based upon His forgiveness, our relationships with others must bear witness to the forgiveness God has shown us.
- Unforgiveness destroys both the unforgiving person and everyone who cares about him.

4,) Unforgiveness is a confirmation of lostness.

- Anyone whose life is characterized by a continuous pattern of unforgiveness is a person who has not truly been saved.
- v. 32-33 – No one who cherishes their unforgiveness can sincerely claim to cherish Christ.
 - We are not saved because we forgive others. We cannot ever earn heaven.

- However, if we steadfastly refuse to forgive others we offer ample evidence that we ourselves have not understood or received God's forgiveness of our many sins.
- v. 34-35 – Look here at the fate of those who cling to bitterness.
 - The defiantly unforgiving will end up in hell.
 - A consistent and cherished pattern of unforgiveness tells much more about his true spiritual condition than a lifetime of regular attendance in church.
 - The determined decision not to forgive says more about your heart than a dozen decisions to walk down the aisle and claim to be a Christian.
 - The one who cannot let go of the \$20,000 sin of his brother cannot claim to be rooted in and established upon the \$10 billion forgiveness of God.

-- Release the burden of bitterness.

- Ephesians 4:32 – *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*
- The human heart is not made to carry the immense burden of bitterness.
 - Three separate studies about the physiological impacts of forgiveness and unforgiveness.
 - 1.) A lifetime of studies by PhD Everett Worthington, who has written nearly 20 books on the subject of forgiveness.
 - 2.) A lifetime of studies by PhD Everett Worthington, who has written 100 papers and 4 books of the subject.
 - 3.) An independent study by Charlotte VanOyen Witvliet, a psychology professor at Hope College in Holland, Michigan
 - Their overall conclusions were as follows:

Unforgiveness resulted in higher blood pressure, elevated tension and stress, and in Vietnam vets, unforgiveness was identified as one of the main factors in PTSD. Unforgiveness was also established to be a personal stressor that produces a hormone called “cortisol,” too much of which compromises the immune system, making illness and disease more likely. About a life filled with bitterness, Worthington said, “Our bodies aren't designed to operate that way.”

Forgiveness, on the other hand, as Witvliet says, “had this fascinating quelling effect.” Writing in the San Diego Union Tribune, in an article entitled “The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” Sandi Dolbee writes:

“Those who have toiled in this field the longest—psychologists such as Worthington in Virginia and Robert Enright of the University of Wisconsin Madison—are bullish [about the benefits of forgiveness]. Enright says he now is more impressed with the power of forgiveness to heal than when he began his research two decades ago.” Worthington also is adamant. “It is not going to be refuted,” he says. “It’s going to be refined.”

In these studies, scientists consistently discovered that forgiveness leads to reduced stress, better heart health, an improved immune system, reduced pain, stronger relationships, and greater overall happiness. One publication said, “Granting forgiveness may actually do more for you than the person you forgive.” It should come as no surprise to us that scientific research is corroborating what we already know from God’s Word; and what we know is this: God has simply *not* designed us to bear the burden of bitterness. We cannot handle it. It is far too heavy for us.

Yet so many of us are trying to do what we were never made to do. Instead of living in light of the future glory we will know in Jesus Christ, far too many of us are living in the past and are driven by its pain. Instead of fixing our eyes on Jesus, we focus on revenge. Instead of giving our burden to God, we choose to bury ourselves beneath it.

However—and please hear this today—by the grace of God, you can be free of it today. More than that, through His inspired Word, our Lord is commanding you to let it go. // Come to Christ with forgiveness in your heart and learn to live in the freedom that God establishes through His magnificent mercy.

-- The cross teaches us that there is nothing in all of life that forgiveness cannot conquer.

-- Through the cross of Christ, sin’s curse was conquered, its power was made powerless, and our debt was once and for all deleted.

-- Through the cross of Christ, you and I and everyone who truly believes can be forever forgiven of our \$10 billion debt of sin.

-- And through genuine faith in Jesus Christ, we are given power by the Holy Spirit to forgive, even as we have been forgiven.

-- Is your life stuck in a pattern of unforgiveness? Will you come to the cross today?

- Please do not leave here today unchanged and unforgiving.
- Break the chains of the past. Make the choice to live in the present and aim for the future. Make the choice to forgive.
 - Please take this time to ask yourself, “Who do I need to forgive today?”
 - Say, “Lord, I need you to help me forgive ____.” (We cannot do it ourselves, for the power to sincerely forgive comes from God alone.)
 - Say, “Lord, today I choose to forgive ____.”
 - In your heart, say to that person, “I release you from the hurt you’ve caused me, and I pray God’s grace upon your life.”
- Perhaps you have such trouble forgiving others because you have never been forgiven by God yourself.
 - If your life is marked by willful unforgiveness, Scripture teaches us that you have not been rooted in the mercy of Christ.
 - Would you pray with me to receive the perfect forgiveness from sin that only comes through Jesus Christ?
 - G.O.S.P.E.L., focusing on God’s grace and mercy extended to us in forgiveness in Christ.