

MATTHEW 18:23-35

“THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT”

MARCH 30, 2025

SUMMARY

In this week's Lenten sermon, Jesus disrupts his listeners' understanding of forgiveness. In a first-century Palestine, the Jews were a law-based theocracy. They placed a premium on knowing the boundaries and expectations of the law. This was an essential component of not only everyday life but also how one communed with God. However, what often goes unrecognized is that their overemphasis on the law led to an overemphasis on debts owed rather than the transforming of the heart.

Jesus, aware of this, challenges their thinking with the parable of the unforgiving servant. He aims to shock them into a new perspective as he invites them into his Kingdom. A king pardons his servant of an unimaginable amount of debt. Instead of being softened by such grace, the servant remains unchanged. He confronts one who owes him and abuses him to collect what he believes is rightly owed. Justly enraged by the ungrateful servant, the king punishes him as he should for his unpaid debts.

Pastor Joey stated that the essence of the Parable is this: “Forgiveness not shown is forgiveness not known.” This exemplifies mature Christianity. One who has experienced grace can extend it to others. Of course, this is something we grow into as we allow more of Jesus to deepen within our souls. However, it serves as a great measure by which we can evaluate our spiritual health and need for growth. Regardless of the temptations we face for justice, can we choose to extend compassion and grace as those who have been forgiven the unimaginable debt of our sins?

Pastor Joey encourages us to ask two questions: 1. If the King's forgiveness hasn't transformed you, have you ever known the King's forgiveness in the first place? 2. If you have been transformed but are still in process, how can we further focus our minds on the grace we received rather than the payment of debt that's owed to us?

Let's delve into this important parable and seek to further direct our thoughts toward the gracious king.



This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.

Group facilitator: Please feel empowered to use only the questions that are helpful for the context of your group.

DISCUSSION

Expand Our Awareness

Forgiveness can be challenging, sometimes even impossible.

- What thoughts/emotions hinder forgiveness?
- Where do those thoughts/emotions come from?
- What would it take to change those thoughts/emotions?

Extract the Truth

Read the text: Matt 18:23-35

- What stands out to you from the text that “disrupts” you today?
- Based on your knowledge, how did ancient Roman and Jewish cultures impact the disciples' views on and ability to extend forgiveness?

Pastor Joey explained that Jesus is inviting them into his Kingdom and detailing how they will enter it.

- What does this reveal about how people will enter the Kingdom and how it should transform them?

Jesus is training his people to comprehend his Kingdom intellectually and live practically as if it were a reality. He is preparing his apprentices to go and invite others into the Kingdom.

- What does this reveal about how Jesus expects his disciples to invite others into the Kingdom when he is gone?

Experience Transformation

Pastor Joey used the quote, “Forgiveness known is Forgiveness shown.”

- What do you think that means, and how does that practically work in our lives?

Pastor Joey said that the best way to transform our hearts and minds more quickly is not to dwell on the debts owed to us, but to fill our lives with thoughts of God and His forgiveness for us.

- What stands in your way of experiencing more of God’s extravagant grace so that you can extend it to others?

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- What is one thing you could practically do this week to better focus on “forgiveness known”?
- What is one thing you could practically do this week to practice “forgiveness shown”?

Pray



**PREPARE FOR
NEXT WEEK:**

Luke 18:1-8