



## KINGDOM FORGIVENESS

The Kingdom of God is Like... | 3.22.26

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Hunter Emmert 0:00

Well, good morning, bintrey. It's a privilege to be with you this morning, if we have not met before. My name is Hunter, and I get the honor and the privilege of being the high school pastor here at bintrey. Thank you. I paid them each \$20 to do that. It is a joy, one of the greatest joys of my life, to work here, to work with our incredible staff, and to get to see our students week after week fall in love with Jesus. It's one of the biggest blessings now. One of the other biggest blessings in my life is that I also get to be a father and a husband. And with being a husband and a father have come some responsibilities that I was not quite briefed on beforehand. Okay, the main one being that, apparently I was supposed to be an expert engineer, okay, I was not briefed on this ahead of time. I was just made aware of this apparent eternal truth after the fact. And so as engineer Elect of our household, the responsibility to fix everything falls onto my shoulders. And so, because of this eternal truth, I rely strictly on YouTube University, any, any YouTube alma mater in the house, I require many How To videos to fill in the gaps of my technical expertise. And as my wife can attest, my red flag is that I will watch one HOW TO video, and firmly believe with all of my heart that I can now fix anything and everything right. I will watch one how to video to fix a small part of our car, and I now believe God's calling on my life is to start an auto body shop, okay? Or I fix a small electrical issue and a lamp, and I'm now an electrician. I need to rewire our house, or I build an Ikea table, and now I am like Jesus and a master carpenter, right? Which makes her laugh. It's amusing to her, because, in reality, my track record literally proves the exact opposite. Things are usually worse off when I start to touch them and build them. But as much as I love how to videos when it comes to Scripture and the reading of the text in the way that we were designed and meant to read it, when we get to the parables, the stories that are told by Jesus, we can often end up treating those stories like How To videos. I just learn from the story, copy and paste it into my life, and then, man, I'm good, easy fix, and we fall into a trap of thinking that parables are just fictional stories designed to teach us how to live better lives. And what that view of parables does is it causes us to treat them as though they're told simply to make us better Christians, Christian How to videos, if you will. And while there definitely is an aspect of parables that are designed to help us learn how to behave more like Christ, that is not the main goal. See, the main reason that Jesus chose to teach with parables was to both announce and reveal to the world the New Kingdom ethics that he was bringing to Earth. And so the parables of Jesus are an invitation into that new form of reality, into that new ethic. So when we read parables, instead of asking, how does this parable teach me to live better? What we should be asking is, what does this parable teach us about the reality of God's kingdom and the new ethics that Jesus is bringing and that is what our series that we have been in is about. If you're new with us this morning or joining us online, we are in the series called The Kingdom of God is like where we have been looking at different places in the gospels, where Jesus is giving us hints about what the kingdom of God looks like and the new ethics that he is making reality in the kingdom. And so this morning, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 18, and we're going to read a story that Jesus tells in order to communicate another important ethic of God's kingdom that apparently, in God's kingdom, it's going to be full of people that are not full of bitterness, that are not full of anger, not full of jealousy, but it's going to be a kingdom full of people of compassion. It's going to be a kingdom full of people of mercy. God's Kingdom is a kingdom of forgiveness. So if you have a Bible, go and turn to Matthew 18 verse 21 that's where we're going to be spending majority of our time together this morning. Matthew 18 verse 21 here we find Jesus in Capernaum, and he is on a teaching role, as the Messiah tends to do. And he is just taught on humility. He's taught on temptation, he's taught on the vastness of the love of God, how the shepherd chases after the one, how to address sin in a brother or sister that you care about. And then we get to verse 21 Matthew 18. Verse 21 look with me there. Then Peter approached him, meaning Jesus, and asked, Lord, How many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me as many as seven times. See, in Jewish tradition, rabbis would have taught that you could forgive someone up to three times, but the moment that that person crossed the line into offending

for the fourth time, you had the blessing and permission of the rabbi to base. Cut off that relationship, because it was clear that that person was not repentant and they were not understanding the offense that they had caused. And so you can almost picture Peter here in this story. He knows the fourth offense is the traditional cut off moment, but you know, he's feeling himself a little right. He's feeling spiritual. He's been hanging out with this new hip Rabbi named Jesus of Nazareth. And so he goes, Hey, four times. I know that's what about? Seven like that would be wild, right? Seven times. Jesus pay attention to me, right? Seven times. But Jesus responds to Peter and says verse 22 Peter, I tell you, not as many as seven, but try 70 times seven. So that number 70 times seven, or some of your translations, might say 77 it's a symbolic number in Scripture, and it represents the fullness of completion. It represents perfection. And Jesus, in this moment, is making an important parallel to another Old Testament story that everyone present would have been familiar with. See, in Genesis chapter four, an evil descendant of Cain, from Cain and Abel named Lamech makes an announcement to his wives, and he says this in Genesis four, for I killed a man for wounding me. Notice that I killed a man. I ended a man's life for simply wounding me, a young man for striking me, if Cain is to be avenged seven times over, then for Lamech, it will be 77 times. See, God said early in Genesis that if someone hurts Cain, then that person will face vengeance from God seven times over. But Lamech takes this idea and he expands on it, and he says, If someone hurts me, Lamech, then I will take my own personal revenge greater than God's. I will take it 77 times. Essentially, what Lamech is doing is he's bragging about his ability to take out his revenge on people, his rage through complete, perfect revenge. You do not want to cut Lamech off driving down 121 because he will go full Russell Crowe in that weird road rage movie that he did a few years back. You do not want his vengeance. And so Jesus' response to Peter is a call back to the statement from Lamech. And it's a reversal of this mindset from Genesis four. We are called as followers of Jesus not to pursue complete revenge, but instead are called to pursue complete forgiveness. So this was also Jesus' way of reminding Peter to quit counting. Quit putting limits on the mercy of the kingdom. Quit putting limits on forgiveness, the forgiveness available to the very citizens living in the king's kingdom. We are not called to keep a tally on how many times we have forgiven someone, we are simply called to forgive completely, fully and perfectly. Jesus is already two verses into this section, teaching his disciples about the fundamentals of forgiveness in the kingdom of God, and that is that the kingdom of God does not place limits on forgiveness. If it did, you and I, we would be in trouble. But in God's kingdom, in Christ's kingdom, there is no ceiling to the level of forgiveness he is able and willing to extend to us. Therefore there should be no ceiling in our forgiveness that we are willing to extend to one another. Think with me for a moment how detrimental it would be to a relationship if you were to enter into like a marriage or a relationship with someone, and have a preset idea of how many times you were willing to forgive that person, that that marriage would not be in a healthy place, my wife would hit her preset limit of forgiveness by about 9am on Monday morning, and that is because the Kingdom of God does not run on pre decided limits of forgiveness. It runs on a culture of forgiveness, and similarly, our relationships with one another are not supposed to have pre decided limits of forgiveness. They run on a culture of forgiveness, and Jesus is going to continue to explain why through the telling of this parable. Now before we continue on with the story that Jesus is going to tell, I want to quickly point out that there is an important and really distinct difference between what is forgiveness and reconciliation. See, not everyone that you forgive you will be reconciled to and hear me when I say that that is okay, and sometimes in certain situations, that's even encouraged, specifically when it comes to your own personal safety or the safety of somebody that you love, and so I want to start by saying that, because I don't want anyone this morning to think that in order to forgive and end this forgiveness conversation, that you have to enter back into an unsafe situation in order to make forgiveness possible. Forgiveness does not mean pretending that something didn't happen. It does not mean that what someone did was okay, and it definitely doesn't mean that you automatically trust that person the same way. Again, forgiveness simply means choosing to not hold a debt over someone so that you can be free. And so with that important distinction in mind, let's look at verse 23 Jesus starts telling this parable for this reason, he says,

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The King. Of heaven can be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle accounts, one who owed 10,000 talents was brought before him, since he did not have the money to pay it back, his master commanded him that he his wife and his children and everything he had be sold to pay the debt. So Jesus starts off by saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wants to settle accounts, and so he brings before him a servant who owes 10,000 talents. Now, 10,000 talents is an insane amount of money. I don't know if you're up to date on the exchange ratio from the times of Jesus for currency, but this is a lot of money. One talent was the equivalent of about 20 years worth of wages. So this guy here owes about 200,000 years worth of wages to this king. I don't know what he's doing with his money, but he is not taking Dave Ramsey's advice. Dave would yell at him on his radio program, because this is an absurd amount of money. This is an impossible amount of money that he will never be able to repay. And the king knows this, and so he

commands that the servant and his wife and his children be sold to repay the debt. Now, interestingly, even selling the family and everything they had would not come close to repaying the full amount. In fact, it would have only been, it only would have covered about a quarter or an eighth of a single talent. And this guy owes 10,000 and the point of Jesus mentioning this, it's not to promote slavery, it's not to promote the selling of a family into bondage, but rather, to highlight the extreme debt that this man owes. He owes so much money that even his entire family being sold. It would not begin to cover one single talent. There is nothing that this man can do to earn his freedom, which makes this next part all the more powerful. Verse 26 at this the servant fell face down before Him and said, be patient with me, and I will pay you everything. Then the master of that servant had compassion, released him and forgave him the loan. See, upon hearing that his family was going to be sold, that everything they had was going to be sold, he drops to his knees, and he begins to beg, and he tells the king that he will repay him everything which isn't true. It's impossible. This is an impossible amount of money, but when you're stuck between a rock and a hard place, you will say almost anything. Now, as a dad of two girls, the best financial investment I've ever made, not quite 10,000 talents, but they keep raising the price. So I might get there is a Disney Plus subscription, amen. But now, because of this, the blessing and the curse of Disney plus is that I can only ever think through sermon illustrations, through the lens of Disney and so all the Disney movies. So this scene right here with the servant on his knees begging for mercy that He does not deserve, asking to repay a debt that he'll never be able to repay, reminds me of the scene from two time Oscar winning film Lion King, where Scar is defeated and he collapses before the feet of Simba, and he's begging for mercy, and he just starts rambling off anything and everything to get out of the situation that he's in, to avoid the punishment that he deserves. And you see for both Scar and the servant, they are in an absolute state of panic. They are freaking out. And while it doesn't end well for Scar in this moment, at least it ends well for the servant, because it says the king has compassion on him and releases him of his debts. It's this incredible moment of forgiveness. And this moment shows us something else about the Kingdom of God, and it's that the kingdom of God is ruled by a compassionate king. He's ruled it's ruled by a compassionate king. And man, I wish this is where that the story ended. I wish Jesus wrapped up the story. Said, Amen, and then walked off. But this is purposely not where Jesus chooses to end the parable, because Jesus is trying to show us to those listening and us reading the complexities of the human heart. Because, yes, the kingdom of God is ruled by a king who wants to make things right with his servants. Yes, the kingdom of God is ruled by a king who can and will forgive the debts of its citizens. Yes, the kingdom of God is ruled by a king who extends unbelievable forgiveness to those under his reign, but also the kingdom of God is populated by a citizenry, by a people who often do not extend that same forgiveness that they have been given to their fellow citizens and friends. This is a dangerous place to be. We do not want to be in this place. And Jesus wants to make that point and have us learn that lesson. And so he continues on with the parable. Verse 28 that servant, the forgiven. One forgiven. One went out and he found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 Denari. He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, pay what you owe. Think with me for a moment of how insane the situation is. Here is a man who owed 200,000 years worth of debt. His family was about to be sold into slavery, and he is miraculously forgiven of the debt that he should have had to owe, and the first thing that he does is go and shake down another servant, a fellow servant, for the modern equivalent of a few \$1,000 that would be as if you woke up tomorrow morning realized your mortgage was paid, your student loans were paid, your car payment was paid, your medical debt was paid, and then later that day, you go into work, you see a co worker that you bought lunch for last week who hasn't paid you back, and you decide to ruin the entire relationship over a \$15 meal, it would be absurd, and that is the absurdity that Jesus is trying to communicate, because the short sightedness, the hypocrisy here, is supposed to be unbearable to us the listener. That's the point of parables to highlight and to make obvious to those listening and reading our own situations of similar insanity, where we so often and so easily, I might add, act in a way that is not congruent with the reality of the Kingdom of God, situations where our ethic has not lined up with the king's ethic, and so this New servant in the story is subjected to this injustice of the forgiven servant, and it continues. Verse 29 at this his fellow servant fell down and began begging him, be patient with me and I will pay you back. This should sound familiar. This is the exact same situation. Verse 30, but he wasn't willing. Instead, he went and threw him into prison until he could pay what was owed. When the other servants saw what had taken place, they were deeply distressed, and went and reported to their master everything that had happened. Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I have had mercy on you. And because he was angry, his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay what was owed. And then Jesus ends the parable, and he makes what I imagine is really deliberate, really purposeful, and probably a little bit awkward, eye contact with everybody listening. And he says in verse 35 so also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister from the heart. Don't you kind of wish Jesus ended the parable earlier be a little bit more of an uplifting story, because these are heavy words, because to our ears, it sounds as though Jesus is saying that God's forgiveness could be lost, or at the very least that God's forgiveness is conditional. However, I don't think Jesus is

illustrating that it can be lost or that God's forgiveness is conditional. I think what Jesus is doing is he is saying that if you cannot forgive someone, then do you truly have a grasp, do you truly have an understanding of the extreme forgiveness that God has extended to you, because if you haven't understood the insane generosity that Jesus has gifted you, then you are likely missing the point of the gospel. And so Jesus uses strong and piercing language. But again, that's what Jesus does when he tells parables. He wants to clearly communicate the ethics of the kingdom to those listening, there's no way, if you were present, standing next to Peter listening to this, you would have forgotten the insane roller coaster ride of emotions that this story was about how important forgiveness is in God's kingdom, which tells us a lot about the king's heart. And that's that the king grieves when he sees a lack of compassion in his people. Here is the king having just forgiven this servant a debt so great that it would make Jeff Bezos weak at his knees, and yet the forgiven servant is unable to forgive a fellow servant over the equivalent of some pocket change. You see, for the King, the greatest injustice is that is when mercy does not lead to Mercy, because, in the king's eyes, mercy, mercy should always lead to Mercy. Forgiven people should become forgiving people. Now I said earlier, there's a distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness is the grace based decision to release a person from the debt of their wrongdoing, choosing instead to reflect God's mercy rather than exacting revenge. Forgiveness is something that we can do whether the person who caused us the harm is repentant or not, because truthfully, forgiveness is more about us than it is about the other it's about helping us be free from our own mental and emotional bondage to a situation, rather than becoming enslaved to it. Louis meads, a pastor and theologian, puts it this way, that to forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you. Forgiveness is something. Is not setting someone free of the wrong that they did, but it's setting yourself free from the wrong done to you. That's forgiveness can be done even when there is not and ask for forgiveness. However, reconciliation requires repentance from the offending party, because it's the restoration of a people back into a relationship with one another,

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whether it be a spouse, a friend, a relative, but it only ever happens once repentance has been extended, and there are situations. Where it's not always the right path to take. Situations where reconciliation isn't actually recommended. There are situations where forgiveness can be extended, but reconciliation is impossible due to a lack of safety, whether that be physically, emotionally, spiritually, or maybe most common, due to a lack of recognition of wrongdoing in the heart of the wrongdoer in my own life, I've seen this be the case when I was five years old, my parents, they had been divorced for a few years, but I would see my biological father often. But the older that I got, the more spread out those visits became. And the day before my first day of kindergarten, he showed up, and he promised that he was turning his life around, that he was going to be more present and that he was going to be there to walk me in to my first day of kindergarten. That was 24 years ago, and I haven't seen him since then. And I tell you that because you too likely have someone in your life that you feel it would be impossible to forgive that person, because it's something they either did or didn't do, a line, they crossed a promise they broke. Maybe it's a dad or a mom or a relative, a co worker. I don't know who pops into your mind. Don't poop in your mind. Who pops into your mind, but when it comes to the forgiveness conversation, whoever that person is that pops, it feels impossible to forgive that person. I know what the biggest challenge for me was, is the fact that there was never an apology, right? There was never an ask for forgiveness, there was never ownership. And so I had to go on my own journey of forgiveness, and it took time, and to be honest, it's still an ongoing process, and that is because a lack of remorse on one party side can make the path of forgiveness a lot more challenging, and yet Jesus still calls us to take up that task, not by ourselves, not by our own strength, and certainly not by our own wisdom, but through the strength, Through the power and through the wisdom of the Forgiver himself who lives in us. And so while reconciliation might not always be your path forward, friend, forgiveness still is. And as followers of Jesus, as people who are a part of God's kingdom, we are called to forgive, because how we handle the relationships entrusted to us, it matters to God, and it's challenging. And it's challenging because the world often expects and sometimes encourages the exact opposite from us. Forgiveness is not supposed to be something that's given, but rather it's something withheld in order to maintain leverage over that person, or to protect our own pride, or to make sure that they feel the weight of what they did to us, and yet, in a culture that demands retaliation, Jesus calls us to forgive in a culture that promotes rage, Jesus says forgive in a culture that advocates violence. Jesus says forgive in a culture that excuses hatred. Jesus says forgive in a culture that clings to bitterness. Jesus says forgive in a culture that judges quickly. Jesus calls us to forgive and in a culture that wants to see vengeance happen, Jesus says, Forgive our heavenly king. He wants to see his children extend forgiveness to each other. Why? Because he's already forgiven us the greatest debt possible. And so the heavenly king wants to see the currency of the kingdom become radical forgiveness. You can think of no clear example of radical forgiveness in the story of Elizabeth Elliot, whose missionary husband Jim Elliot, was killed alongside four other missionaries in 1956 while they were trying to bring the good news of Jesus to a tribe known as the akkas, and for most people, the death of a husband in such a brutal way would be enough to stir up intense hatred and

bitterness. In fact, that's what the world expected of Elizabeth. And yet, two years after her husband's death, Elizabeth Elliot, their daughter Valerie and Rachel saint, a sister of one of the other missionaries that was killed, they moved to the Akka village, the village of the very people that killed their loved ones, and they lived amongst the tribe's people. And it was there that Elizabeth learned to forgive, and she continued her husband's work, and she led the ACA people to faith in Jesus, and to this day, they are now a completely non violent tribe, where majority of them identify as followers of Jesus, forgiveness extended by a widow in a situation that surely seemed impossible. Elizabeth would go on to say about forgiveness that forgiveness is surrendering my right to hurt you for hurting me. It's the currency of the kingdom, 2000 years ago, a man who was not just any man, hung on a Roman cross, and in the midst of his execution, through dry and bloodied lips, he uttered the famous words, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, extending forgiveness in a situation that surely seemed impossible, because there. Easy to preach about forgiveness, but it's another thing to actually practice forgiveness. See Jesus in Matthew 18, the story that we're reading. He tells that the kingdom of a God, a kingdom of God, is a kingdom that radiates forgiveness. And then a few chapters later, on that cross, He demonstrated exactly what he meant, forgiveness is possible, but friends, is it something that once you have received you're willing to pass on, or is it something where you're keeping count, waiting to get to four? Because when we look at the kingdom of God, and we listen to the words of Jesus, we learn that the kingdom of God, it will be inhabited by those who are both forgiven and forgiving you and I, we, we racked up a debt so high that we could never hope to repay it, and when we stand before our holy and righteous king, whose rule and reign is just that holy and righteous, we stand before Him, we should have had to owe a debt. We should have been forced to try to live 1000 lifetimes, to try to redeem our payment, and yet we still would have fallen short. But praise God that we do not stand before our King on our own account, but we stand on account of a man who was not just any man named Jesus, who forgave his murderers up on the cross. And now we do not enter the throne room on our own basis, but we have one who goes before us and advocates on our behalf. Hebrews 4:14 says this, Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith, for we have a high priest who is for we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, and yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace and help in our time of need see, we can approach the throne of God because we have been forgiven. We can walk into the throne room of our King, the people who sinned against our King, because our debt has been paid, and now, thanks to Jesus, forgiveness is not just something we get to do, but it becomes an attribute of who we are when we are in Christ, our identity is as a forgiven citizen, and because of that truth, you now have the Forgiver himself living in you, giving you the ability to forgive others, even when it seems impossible. Our demonstration of forgiveness becomes the direct result of having experienced the ultimate forgiveness from our King, because in the kingdom of God, forgiven people become forgiving people. And so my question to you this morning, friends, is, who in your life are you holding on to anger towards? Who are you holding on to bitterness towards, who are you holding on to resentment towards? Who are you holding on to a grudge towards that is worth, worth pocket change in comparison to what the king of the universe has already forgiven you for, Charles Spurgeon famously said that our sin is an immense debt, one that we could never hope to repay. No effort, no morality, no religious activity, could ever settle the account that we owed to God. But Christ stepped forward as our substitute. He paid the entire debt on the cross what we could never accomplish in eternity. He finished in a single moment of sacrifice, if forgiveness is possible for us, the very people who sinned against our King, who are we not to extend that same forgiveness to the people in our lives that need it most? What a beautiful introduction into the ethics of the kingdom of God that would be, what a beautiful introduction and what a witness forgiveness can be to those in our lives, because in God's kingdom, forgiveness is not a suggestion, it is a direct reflection of the mercy that we have received. Forgiven people, friends become forgiving people. So now we're going to stand and we're going to sing a song about the freedom that we have received in Christ, Jesus, you.