

September 17, 2017  
Sermon for The Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Matthew 18:21-35

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Matthew 18:21–35 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. <sup>23</sup> “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ <sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ <sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. <sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

This morning we are going to start with two questions. We all have faced these questions in the past and probably will again in the future. These questions have something in common... the same answer.

So the first question: What is a person's deepest need?  
What is a person's greatest achievement?

The answer: forgiveness.

Am I exaggerating? Maybe. But then think about it.  
How hard is it to say "I was wrong. Please forgive me." Even to our spouse.

How hard is it to let someone who has harmed me owes me something to let it go?

Jesus calls us to forgive! And He gives us the power to do so through the Holy Spirit! Now we truly can forgive!

I mean, let's face it: we are unforgiving. It is in our very nature. To err is human. And not to forgive is human, too. Forgiveness is truly divine because in our natural human condition, our lives corrupted by sin, we have no way to reconcile with those who hurt us. And to tell the truth, we really don't want to either! Mess with the cat and you get the claws! And we have loong memories!

Even as Christians we often refuse to forgive.  
We want to remain in control.

We like the feeling of having someone in our debt, under our power.

Our selfishness still seeks to enslave us. We end up a slave to ourselves because who would want to be around us when we are acting like that anyway?

Our brooding, moody “funks” are sometimes symptoms of an unforgiving heart. We are the “Wicked servant!” And the king’s judgment is just. Following our evil intentions and soon we are evil doers, denying forgiveness to others...and thereby denying our own forgiveness.

For Jesus’ sake, God releases us from our debt to Him...you are forgiven! The king is tender toward us, filled with pity, longsuffering, and compassion. He suspends the judgment we deserve, since He imposed it on His own Son. His full wrath was spent on Jesus as He hung on the cross for you.

His great act of love toward us is seen in Jesus’ death on the cross, which removes our sin and releases us from its consequences. Forgiveness is fully removing, through no worthiness of our own.

Our debt to God is astronomical. Yet, with instant, full and free forgiveness, He liberates us, removing the debt, as far as the east is from the west. One scarred hand to another. Doesn’t matter what or how many times, when we call upon Jesus as our Savior in repentance, those sins are forgiven...and forgotten, no matter how many times the devil reminds us of them, those sins are gone!  
(Jer.31:34)

In our new relationship with God, established by Christ, He empowers us to forgive others. Now we can forgive. Now we can mature in our ability to receive and grant forgiveness.

As a Christian, we stand in a middle point, between receiving mercy and giving mercy. The Bible tells us to '[forgive] *one another, as Christ forgave you*' (Col 3:13; Eph 4:32); and sometimes we receive as Matthew 5:7 tells us: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' (Mt 5:7)

Now we can give up our attempts to control others through guilt. We let go of their sin... Forgive them too and they are free.

Being forgiven and forgiving other, we can now move from brooding resentment for the hurts we have received to the forgiveness of Christ which sets us free. 19<sup>th</sup> Century writer, Hannah More put it very well when she said:

"A Christian will find it cheaper to pardon than to resent. Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits"

It's true. There is only one answer to these two penetrating questions we ask ourselves.

What do I need most? Forgiveness.

What is my greatest achievement? Forgiveness.

Forgiven by God for Jesus' sake, we can now forgive. And so we pray to our gracious Father in heaven, "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*"

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.