

I always love those moments in the service where I realize, hey, Shawna doesn't even know what we're preaching about this morning. There's a whole bunch of seats up here, right here in the middle. I'm going to just anyone who's seated at the back and there's. No, not you. I'm going to give you guys a pass back there.

Noah, you and your lovely bride, you're good. Thank you. Thank you. Cameron, this morning, you're my favorite.

This is how you win my approval. Sit up close. I love it when Shauna is leading worship and we're singing songs. I'm like, this is so good. This is so good.

And ties so nicely in with the context. This morning we're going to get into our series, but I don't know, I was woken up yesterday morning with some pretty impacting news. A little scary news I was telling Ron earlier. I have full confidence in a God who orders the world, who, who is not surprised by anything, who is not scared or shaken by any world events. But that doesn't mean that we aren't scared and shaken sometimes by world events.

And I know there's families here in our congregation who have other family members who are in the Middle east right now, and you have a lot of concerns and fears about their safety. So I thought we would begin the morning just by praying, praying for the situation, praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ, our Christian brothers and sisters in Iran, praying for the leadership. They're praying for the people there, praying for that country, a lot of upheaval, praying for safety, for the people that we love and care about, our servicemen, those who are protecting and defending and. And part of this thing that even they may not know fully about. So can we do that?

Just before we go any further, let's just bow our heads and let's just pray for this situation. Heavenly Father, it is never a bad idea to pray for peace. You said to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. And so we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, but we also pray for the peace of other cities, other. Other countries in that area that are.

Have just been rocked by turmoil and disruption for far, far, far too long. We pray for peace. I. I want to pray specifically for Christian believers. They have. They have endured so much persecution.

They live underground with their faith. I just pray for them as well, that, that you would protect them from harm. And as they, in the chaos find themselves either under increased scrutiny or in the path of harm or violence, I just pray you would protect them, keep them safe. And then I pray for those pastors who are leading those congregations of young believers who are trying to gather, to encourage, to pray with, to serve the communities that they're in, to be the presence of Jesus right there in the chaos and the turmoil. I pray for them that you

would give them wisdom, you would embolden their leadership, you would embolden their testimony, embolden their witness, give them discernment and courage in this moment.

Jesus, we pray for the peace and the lasting freedom of this country that has just been beset for so long with oppression from within and oppression from without. And these are people who are tired and weary and want peace just like we do. So, Lord, we pray for those people, Lord, in the ongoing months and days, days and months where they're establishing a new pattern, we pray God, that you would help direct that and lead them on a path of stability and future peace. Prosper our, prosper these people. You tell us to pray for our enemies and these people are not our enemies but God.

They're people that we have lived at odds with for so long. And we just want to step outside of that tension and just see them as you see them dearly, dearly beloved creations that you long to call sons and daughters so you love them. And so we pray for them, bring peace to their families, bring peace to those neighborhoods, bring peace to that entire country. And then we pray that the light of Christ would shine ever brighter. It is in dark places that light shines the brightest.

And so right now it's a scary time. It's a chaotic time. It's a time where there's lots of questions. It's a time where there's lack of trust. You don't know who to talk to, who not to talk to.

You don't know who's on your side or who's against you. I just pray in this moment that the believers there would be the light of Christ to their community, that Jesus, the gospel will be planted in a firm way in Iran right now as we talk about hope and healing here. That's what we pray for that country. In Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. Last week, Allen, who is recovering from some surgery, not life threatening at all, but. But I think Kedra is ready for him to get better. You know how that is. I think she ready for him to be on the mend, but he's not able to be with us this morning.

But last week he preached and he took us into the life of Peter in this moment where Peter had made this amazing, bold declaration of his faith and utter commitment to the cause of Christ. And then we. We know what happened if you were here. There was this tremendous fall, and Peter disappointed himself, and. And he just felt like an utter embarrassment and a failure to God.

And what did Jesus do? Jesus. Jesus doesn't reject him. Jesus doesn't say, get out of here. I never knew you.

Instead, Jesus goes looking for Peter and he brings him back. And he reminds Peter that he is dearly loved and that God still has an

ongoing plan for his life. And it's just this beautiful reminder that while we are not perfect, God still loves us and God still uses us. And if you are here this morning and you are not yet perfect, but you see how sometimes God uses you, and you know that God loves you, then say Amen. So the rest of us are reminded to Amen.

We prayed at the end. I come to you as I am, not as I wish I were, because we're not there yet, are we? But today we're going to be looking at the flip side of that, because it's not just us who wrestle with imperfection. The people around us do as well. And sometimes their sin, their imperfection comes in contact with our sin and our imperfection.

And what happens? We have this conflict. We have this, this. This. This.

This disappointment, this hurt that happens when someone's imperfection meets our imperfection. And we're left going, oh, angry, distrustful, resentful, all the things. And if any of you have dealt with that, can you also say Amen? So. So we know we're not alone.

Amen. Amen. How do we handle as believers, how do we handle living our faith in these moments? What Jesus offers us, and not just offers, but commands us to operate with this principle, forgive. It's radical.

It is a radical principle, and it upsets every egg in our little baskets most of the times. But. But he gives us no. He gives us no quarter on this. This is it.

We forgive. So today we're gonna. We're gonna be looking at that, and we're gonna be looking specifically at Matthew, chapter 18, verses 21 through 35. And I'm gonna read a few of those scriptures. But if you've got your Bibles with you this morning, I'm gonna have you just open them up, too, because I'm gonna skim through some parts that want to dig a little deeper in, because there's good stuff in the scripture that we're going to.

We're going to put some spotlight on. So Matthew, chapter 18, verses 21 through 35, and we're going to look at verse 21. Peter comes to Jesus. This is the same Peter who will later disappoint Jesus incredibly. And Peter says, lord, how many times do I have to forgive that guy over there who continues to sin against me?

Up to seven times. Really? Up to seven times. And Jesus answers, I tell you, not seven times. And Peter's probably like, good, I can walk away from that person.

He says, not seven times, 77 times. Now if you got the old King James, anyone here reading out of the authorized version, it's 70 times 7.

A lot, in fact, so much so that I feel like Jesus is saying, yeah, just forgive him. Don't, don't get your calculus, don't get your abacus out. Just forgive them. And then to illustrate this, he goes on to tell this parable. And this is where I'm not going to read it verbatim.

I'm going to tell the story. And if you want to follow along in your Bibles, I encourage you to do so. Jesus tells a parable and he begins it this way. He says, the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven.

This is a big thing with Jesus. This is the life and the place of hope and healing that we want to live in. This is the place we want to be. This is a place where Jesus says, this is where it's at, this kingdom of heaven. This is where you want to abide, not just in the hereafter, but in the right now.

He says the kingdom of heaven is like this. He says a king getting all his financial affairs in order and in the accounting process. He realizes that one of his servants, one of his advisors, owes him some money to the tune of 10,000 bags of gold. Now, there are people who actually measure this and count this and account for the exchange rates and the currency and inflation, all that. And they say it is the equivalent to 108 billion.

Say billion. Billion. That's a made up number as far as I'm concerned. I get excited about hundreds, honestly, in my life. When you say billion, it's like quadrillion.

It's like, it's a word that preschoolers use to describe a lot. But, but actually a billion is a real number. For, for comparison, the state of Indiana's annual budget runs about 45 billion. This guy owed 108 billion, twice the size, more than twice the size of the state of Indiana. I think New York's annual operating budget was about 140 billion.

So, so it's a lot of money. Can we just agree it's A lot of money. He goes to the guy, says, listen, I don't want to bug you, but it. But I need that money back. That's a lot.

I need you to repay that. And the guy's like, oh, oh, oh, I completely forgot about it. Okay?

Please, please, just have mercy. I'll get it back to you. I'll get it back to you. And the king says, you know what? Forget it.

Forget never happened. Enjoy your life. The guy goes out, let's call him Bill. Bill. Anyone here named Bill?

I'm not picking on you if your name's Bill. Bill walks out, and who does he run into but Sam? And he goes, I loaned that guy 800 bucks,

which is what that amount would be. I loaned that guy 800 bucks six months ago. I don't think he's paid a dime of it back.

And he goes up to Bill and he grabs him by the collar, and he pushes him up against the wall. He says, give me my money.

And Sam's like, I can't pay you right now, but I'll do my best. I'll do my best. Says, no, no, I'm going to throw you into prison until you can pay the debt. And he does. Now, of course, people in the courtyard of the palace are watching this, and it doesn't take very long for the news to get back to the king, who calls Bill back in, says, hey, Bill, what's up?

What's up with what happened in the courtyard? What are you talking about? What are you talking about? I know all about it. Sam's in prison right now because he owes you 800 bucks, and I forgave you \$108 billion.

You go to prison in his place, and he sends Bill to prison.

Here's how Jesus ends this parable. He says, this is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you. Unless you forgive your brother and sister from your heart, forgiveness is not an option. As followers of Jesus, we don't get to pick and choose when we forgive and who we forgive. We forgive.

Anyone want to fight me on it? I forgive you.

The kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, is like this grace of forgiveness. It's structured around it in many ways. It's the scaffolding upon which this life of hope and healing and freedom is built. Experiencing it depends on us for giving. And it reminds us of the unbelievable billions worth of grace that we ourselves have given, received through Christ.

But with that grace that we've received comes this very weighty responsibility that comes with it. We then have to forgive others. And if we don't forgive others. We find ourselves imprisoned and exiled from experiencing the kingdom of heaven that Jesus wants us to experience here on earth. So this is step eight in our series.

Step eight says this. We forgive those who have harmed us and we become willing to make amends to those we have harmed. Peter asked Jesus for a number. How many times is enough? Seven?

Seven? Is that sufficient? Can I give up after seven times? And Jesus answers with a number. But Alan said this, and so good.

He goes, this is not about math, it's about mercy. Mercy that we can extend to others because we ourselves have received it. Now let me

just push pause here real quick because the last time I spoke on this, with this level of focus, I had a family who approached me afterwards and they shared something about their family situation and was not a minor deal, it was a big deal. This family had experienced great harm by someone they trusted. It was serious harm and they were wrestling with what it meant to forgive.

Because it's not just about saying, oh, that doesn't matter, it's about protecting others from future harm. It's keeping the person who hurt from doing that again.

So if there's murky waters around this idea of forgiveness, we need to dispel those and get right think where wrong think was. So there's no such thing as forgiving and forgetting. Can we agree with that? Unless you have been diagnosed with clinical grade amnesia, you are not going to forget. Wrong done to you.

Sometimes it's a smell, sometimes it's a visual, sometimes it's a sound. And things can trigger and come right back up to the surface. Anyone know what I'm talking about? Forgiving is not about forgetting. Maybe someday, but.

But I tell you, I can remember pretty quickly if I want to. The insults and harms against me. So it's not about forgetting. Forgetting is almost an impossibility. Don't put yourself under pressure to forget and think if you don't forget then you've not forgiven.

They're not the same thing. And forgiveness is not about just pretending nothing happened. Maybe you're tempted to do that just so you sort of keep the peace in the family or, or not stir up drama. I don't like drama. I like to keep the peace.

But that's not forgiveness. That's putting your head in the sand like an ostrich is mythically supposed to do. That's not forgiveness. And forgiveness is not continually putting yourself or others in dangerous or compromising situations thinking that that's the Christian kind, merciful thing to do. That's not forgiveness.

So if you're in any of those situations, it is alright to set really good. Well, let's keep going. Forgiveness is about realizing this truth right here. I am more sinful than I care to admit. Amen.

You are more sinful than you like to admit. If you're here with a spouse, turn to them and say, I love you, but you are much more sinful than you like to admit.

But here's the other truth and this is what we're going to say to each other as well. You are more loved than you dare to hope. Turn to your neighbor and tell them that you are more loved than you dare to hope.

And the third truth is this. You've been forgiven debt that you could never repay, ever. And because of that, because you're not perfect either, because God loves you anyway. Because the grace is so amazing, you can unclench your fist from around your heart and say, okay, I. I am going to release you from any obligation that you owe me because of harm you did me.

How do you do that? I wish Jesus offered us an easy step by step. He doesn't. There's no. You just.

You can't Google the four steps to forgiveness. And what did Jesus say? Jesus doesn't give us four steps. He does give us some principles. And one of them is found in Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 32, and then chapter 5, verse 1.

Here's what it says. It says, be kind to one another, be tender hearted, Forgive one another as God in Christ forgave you. And there's that callback to the amazing grace that we've all received. And here's what Paul says to the Ephesians. Be imitators of God as beloved children.

So in forgiving, we in some way act like God would act. We put ourselves in God's shoes in some weird sense and go, okay, I want to imitate God who loved me, who forgave me and frees me. We imitate God, we imitate the King in this parable story and we release the demand for repayment. One of my favorite stories in the Old Testament, many of you know it could tell me, tell it better than I can, is the story of a young man named Joseph, whose brothers hated him so much that they sold him into slavery, they human trafficked him, they sold him to foreign merchants and he was taken from his family, from his homeland, and he was transported far, far away. And you might think, oh, at least he's away from his horrible family.

But it, but it doesn't get better for Joseph, in many ways, he is falsely accused. He ends up in prison. And I'm telling you, if I had been Joseph, I would have probably spent a lot of evenings on my cot thinking of ways that when I get the chance, I'm going to get him back. I'm going to get even with those guys and they're going to know. They're going to see and they're going to understand.

They're going to feel the pain that they made me feel. But I am not Joseph. Joseph is this amazing man who keeps his focus on God, not on his disappointing family. And the point in the story comes where Joseph is miraculously elevated to the second highest position in the entire region with the ability, with a single word, to destroy and humiliate anyone who harmed him, anyone who he had something against. And when his brothers show up for financial assistance, what does Joseph do?

I'll give him this, if you know the story. He toys with him just a

little bit. But in the end, he comes to them and says, listen, boys, you're forgiven. Don't panic, don't worry, don't be anxious because you intended to harm me. But God intended it for good.

Some debts can be repaid. I owe Bedford Federal Savings bank money for the home I live in. Over time, I can pay that back. I plan on doing that. Susan, you can rest easy with that.

But some debts can't be repaid. Lost innocence, betrayal, abandonment, abuse. Years stolen by someone else's sin. There's no amount of money, there's no amount of time that can bring those back. There's nothing could bring back those years that that were stolen from Jacob.

Time with his dad, time watching his little brother grow up. Time being with the family. Shared memories of holidays together. He's never going to get that back. Nothing can restore that to him.

Nothing is going to compensate him for the physical and emotional harm that they did him. But forgiveness released them from worrying about how to repay that horrible thing they did. He forgave them.

The second thing that I think when we, when we imitate God is that we see things through God's perspective. We take a redeemed perspective. And this is both the looking back on what happened and the looking forward and the looking in the middle at what God is doing because of or in spite of, but good things God is doing. Joseph looked back. The past couldn't be changed.

The pain, pain couldn't be changed. Whatever justice might have been deserved in the moment is now history. But Joseph says, I belong to God. I am his beloved child. I am a child of God.

I know that God works all things together for good. And God can use my past, not just the things I've done, but the things that others have done to me. God can use that if we allow him to use that to do good.

And Joseph says, moving forward, I'm going to use that past experience to make the future better for me and for those I love. I'm going to move forward.

Looking at your past through the lens of God's redemption doesn't excuse what happened. It was wrong. And it will always be wrong, no matter what good came out of that moment where his brother sold him into slavery. Selling your brother into slavery, Robert, listen, is always wrong. Amen.

Amen. But forgiveness is acknowledging that wrong and still saying, but God. But look what God has done because of that. And through that. And despite that, he makes all things beautiful in his time.

He makes all things work together for good, for those who love him and are called according to. To his purpose. And this is what we lean on when we look at forgiveness through God's perspective. For Joseph, his brothers took him from his family. It was wrong.

It will always be wrong.

But if that hadn't happened, Joseph would never have found himself working for the most powerful man in the world with the ability to save not just his 12, his 11 brothers and his dad and their family, but the entire country. Thousands upon thousands. Millions upon millions, maybe billions, I don't know. Population at that time were saved because of. Because that moment happened.

That moment wasn't good. That moment was wrong. But God redeemed that and did something amazing through it.

That thing intended to hurt me, you might say. But look. Look, like Joseph, God is using that moment in my life to do good. So that's a redeemed view. And then we allow others to experience the same grace that we've experienced.

Releasing these people hurt you to Jesus, not to his judgment. Like, I'm going to pray that God brings the wrath of heaven and hell down on your head. That's not forgiveness. All right. Releasing people to the grace of God say, lord, you have blessed me.

I pray your blessing on the Iranian people. It's scary, but Lord, bless, protect, keep, save and deliver your people.

Not because they deserve it, who of us does? But because God and probably a few other people have showed mercy to you and me. Joseph says, God blessed me. Now I get to bless you. And I know some of you may be shocked at this, but if your spouse did not remind you, if your partner didn't remind you, if your Friend, friend next to you didn't remind you.

There's a very excellent chance that you have hurt someone in your past. You've said something, you've done something. And Jesus says if you think something wrong in your heart, you have as good as murdered them. So there's a good chance that you also have sinned against someone in the same way they have sinned against you. If that person is coming to your mind right now, this probably a good idea for you to hop up and leave.

And if that makes you uncomfortable, honestly, I would throw incredible respect at you if I saw someone get up right now and walk out the door to address an unforgiveness issue or a forgiveness issue that needs to be dealt with, because that's how important it is. The Bible says you don't go further in your worship with God if there's

someone out there in your brain that you need to talk to and say, I'm sorry. So if you're not wanting to get up, I get it, I get it. But here's what I want you to do. I want you to write a note in your phone that as soon as you leave here, you make a phone call or you set your GPS to their address and you go talk to them.

Get that off your plate. Ask for forgiveness. Okay, here's a fun little life hack to avoid that moment where you have to embarrass yourself or open yourself up to someone, as he says in Ephesians, remember that passage? Let me go back to it. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

If we live with that, if we live with kindness, with tenderheartedness, if we live with forgiveness, the more we live there, the less likely we are to do, say, act in a way that requires a deep, deep, deep request for forgiveness.

I see that hand back there. Yes. Ask forgiveness, buddy. We.

We all need to forgive. And we probably all need to ask for forgiveness. But the more forgiving you are, the more you imitate God, the merciful king, the tender hearted master, the less likely you are to say or do something that does harm to others.

And in the meantime, you give people the opportunity to receive the grace that you've received yourself from God. The second thing is, the last thing is this. God wants you to live in freedom, not in chains.

Unforgiveness keeps us chained to what hurt us for a long, long, long time. Long after the person who hurt you even remembers it happened. Our unforgiveness keeps us right there. Clink. To that prison wall.

In the parable, the unforgiving servant ends up thrown in prison, not for his debt. Did you notice that it wasn't the money that put him back in prison, it was the unforgiveness. The unforgiveness is what put him back in prison. When we refuse to extend mercy, we imprison ourselves. I don't know who said it.

Someone said Mark Twain said it. Mark Twain and Abraham Lincoln get blamed for a lot of things. But this is a good quote, so I think Mark Twain would take it. He says, unforgiveness is drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. Anyone ever heard that saying, saying before?

Unforgiveness is drinking poison, expecting the other person to die. Forgiveness.

Forgiveness can often can sometimes feel like we're giving the person who hurt us a free pass. Well, if I don't, if I don't keep hold of this, then no one else will and they'll just go on. What lesson will

they learn? Who's ever going to call them out on their stuff? If no one.

If I don't hold on to this somehow.

But we're the ones who end up suffering for it. We're the ones who drink the poison. So step eight invites us into a different future where I don't have to carry that pain on my own. We bring it to Jesus and say, Jesus, help us with this. I want to forgive.

It's hard, but I want to do. Also reminds us that we can forgive and also keep healthy boundaries. You can forgive people and not invite them to your family birthday party. You know what I mean? That's alright.

You can forgive and have healthy boundaries. You can forgive and steer clear of unsafe and unhealthy relationships. I encourage you to do so.

You can forgive and take time to rebuild trust.

Because forgiving someone from your heart, as Jesus says, it's a process. I love this also. It's a process. It's not a switch that you flip on the side of the wall. It's a process.

Yesterday Robert wanted to go somewhere. He's in the other kid's class, so I'm tell the story on him. But it's a good one. He wanted to go someplace. I said, well, yeah, that's fine.

How's your room look? Because if your room's clean, if your chores are done, you get a little allowance. Oh, I'll go clean it real quick. So he goes up and he comes right back down. I mean, five minutes comes down.

I said, he says, it's done. I said, really, honestly, I've seen you take the whole day trying to get your room cleaned up. He goes, well, I've been trying to keep it clean, and if you keep it tidy, it doesn't take long at all to just make the bed and put your clothes in the dirty hamper and clean things up. I'm like, hey, that's amazing insight. That is incredible insight.

You are absolutely correct.

So, like Robert in his room, your life's going to go a little messy. You're going to notice some unforgiveness popping up every once in a while. What do you do with that? Do you let it pile up in the corner so that someday you take a whole day to just get rid of all your wrongs and clean up your list? No, every day you just.

When you see it, when you feel it, when you think it, you say this simple prayer. Lord, I choose to forgive. Help my heart catch up. Help

me for to give. We're going to have communion here right now.

And before we take it, before we take the bread and the cup, I just. This is the question. Are you holding on to unforgiveness? Are you holding onto resentment? Are there people in your life, you're like, oh.

And I just want to say again, forgiving is the key to experiencing the hope and healing that this sermon series has been about. The kingdom of heaven that Jesus wants for us is scaffolded around our willingness to forgive, to free us up, to experience the life Jesus wanted us. Now, this is hard. It's so hard that it took Jesus to die for us so that we ourselves could be forgiven. We can't do it on our own.

That's why before Jesus ascended into heaven, he's promised us someone who could help us with this stuff, the Holy Spirit. He says, when the Holy Spirit comes, he'll be your advocate, he'll be your comforter, and he'll be your helper. And so in these moments where we know what we need to do and you, yet we find that it's going to be hard. We pray, Holy Spirit, help me to forgive. Help me to forgive.

Holy Spirit, through the cross, we have been reconciled back to God. We are no longer slaves to sin, but we are children of God. Christ lives in us. We've been adopted. We've made joint heirs with Christ.

Christ, we are your sons and daughters. We've been raised up. We've been seated with Christ by his stripes. We have hope and we have healing.

And we look at our lives and we say what Satan intended for evil. God through the cross you have brought good and we have been the recipients of it. So our prayer today is as we talk about forgiving others. We want to be used for good in someone else's life. So help us to forgive as we think that we are in Jesus name.

Thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know you can watch all of our video content, both current and past, on our YouTube channel. Visit [YouTube.com sherwoodoaks](https://www.youtube.com/sherwoodoaks) to watch messages, series and complete worship services.