

w/b 31st December 2017 - FORGIVENESS IN AN AGE OF REVENGE - MATTHEW 18

LAUNCH

- Can you think of a famous film, play or story in which either unforgiveness or forgiveness formed a key part of the story. What was the outcome?
- When you fail to forgive what mental, emotional and even physical symptoms accompany your unforgiveness?

DISCOVERY & UNDERSTANDING

- The Jewish principle was to forgive someone up to 3 times, but not to go beyond that. Why was Peter proud of his statement?

- The first servant owed a debt that equals hundreds of millions of pounds. Why would Jesus use such a large number in his story? What is Jesus trying to tell us here?

- What did the man beg for in verse 26? How did his master respond in verse 27? What does this show you about how forgiveness works generally?

- The second servant owed the first servant a debt that equals a few thousand pounds. It's still a significant debt, yet he refused to forgive him even though the man said the exact same thing to him that he said to his own master. What is Jesus trying to help us see here?

- Why do you think Jesus wants us to forgive others for the wrongs they have done to us? What are the alternatives practiced by people who do not forgive?

- C.S. Lewis said, *"Forgiveness is a beautiful word, until you have something to forgive."* Think about the contrast that forgiveness creates. When we need to be forgiven for something, forgiveness is beautiful and we want mercy. Yet, often when we need to forgive someone else; it is less attractive because we want justice.

Think of a situation when you received mercy. How did it feel and how did you respond?

When have you had to show mercy, and how did it feel but what was the cost?

OPTIONAL STUDY: 'If God's forgiveness of us is conditional on us showing total forgiveness towards others, none of us stands the remotest chance of getting into heaven.'

How do you square this particular circle?

Don Carson says this:

"It is precisely because God is a God of such compassion and mercy that he cannot possibly accept as his, those devoid of compassion and mercy. This is not to say that the king's compassion can be earned: far from it, the servant is granted freedom only by virtue of the king's forgiveness. As in 6:12, 14-15, those who are forgiven must forgive, lest they show themselves incapable of receiving forgiveness."

Does this quote help or simply create further complications?

APPLICATION

- As we enter into a fresh new year as a church, now is a great time to forgive. Are there any relationship debts that you need to cancel right now? Spend time quietly reflecting and praying this through on your own.
- Also reflect on whether any follow up action is needed to confirm that the debt is forgiven.
- Spend some time thanking God for the billion pounds worth of debt that he cancelled for each and every one of us in sending Jesus to die on the cross.

Questions include material from Noosa Anglican church Australia. Grace church Texas & IVP study notes on Matthew. CS Lewis and Don Carson quotes come from these studies (I'm not that well read!)