

Valley Bible Church – Parables of Jesus

What is God Like? He gives mercy, expects mercy.

The Two Creditors

Matthew 18:21-35

Introduction:

Last week we began two lessons that include three parables that tie together: (Actually they have become three lessons with four.)

The first applied to God's relationship to man--

It was a story of mercy and grace

God has provided the same salvation, a free gift of His grace and mercy regardless of when a man comes to Him. *"Salvation is by grace through God given faith, not of works lest any man should boast."*

The second lesson applies to man's relationship to man--It is a story of love and forgiveness

Since God has offered such great and magnanimous mercy to each of us, it is our responsibility, even God's demand, that we show mercy to others as well.

We ended last weeks lesson with this statement,

"We are forever deeply in debt to God for His great free gift of eternal life."

That is the theme of our second and third lessons.

These parables reveal to us the heart of God, but also drive home our responsibility to respond to His heart by becoming less like our natural selves and more like him.

God is working in this area of my life right now.

I can understand that:

I am not worthy of God's mercy, that undeserved care and pity and kindness, He pours out on me daily.

I do not deserve God's grace, that undeserved favor that caused him to give His son to die for me nor the riches he has prepared.

I understand that God is good and I am blessed.

But I don't always do real well when I see others reap the benefit of his mercy and grace.

It tends to bother me to see the unrighteous, even wicked, with health, wealth and happiness. When people who don't do their jobs or work hard see success and achievement. When liars prosper.

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When the ungodly partake of God's common grace. (I sound like Job.)

It also troubles me when believers who are living selfish and ungodly lives seem to be blessed abundantly.

The lesson I have yet to master is that God expects me to react to others, recipients of His grace and mercy, based on the fact that I am one of those recipients myself.

My reaction to God's mercy and grace to others is to be one of joy:

The question posed by the Parable of the Prodigal Son is, "Why can't you, the older brother and speaking to us as well, understand the heart of the loving father?"

The question asked by the Parable of the Crazy Employer is, "Why can't you, all day workers, understand the heart of the generous lord?"

The question put to Jonah, Prophet of God, who didn't want his heathen enemies in Niniveh to repent and escape God's judgment was, "... should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand...?" (Ch. 4, V. 11)

Today's and next week's parables don't just *ask* these kinds of questions. They *demand that we act* to extend mercy and grace to others as they have been extended to us.

Parable of the Two Creditors: (Read Matthew 18:21-35)

Background

A. Forgiveness

God's pattern: (Read Matthew 18:15-17)

Jesus presents a pattern for solving personal differences and for church discipline.

If a brother sins, go to him, etc., etc. This is God's way of keeping peace and purity in the body.

Peter's reaction: (v. 21)

OK. I can do that, but "*Lord, how many times shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?*"

In the Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Jesse Ben Judah said, "If a man commits an offense once they forgive him, a second time, they forgive him, a third time they forgive him, the fourth time they do not forgive him."

So Peter doubles that and adds one for good measure. "*Up to seven times?*"

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B. Forgiveness Plus

God's code:

Jesus answers, "Not 3 times, not 7 times, not 10 times, but seventy times seven times. This does not mean count up to 490 offenses and then you can retaliate. It is a play on words meaning "JUST KEEP ON FORGIVING."

Mercy doesn't keep a count, it just keeps on forgiving.

Forgiveness is to be infinite:

The message is "Always be ready to forgive." One writer put it very well, "*The truth unfolded in this parable is that forgiveness must be, as it is with God, a constant attitude . . . the word forgive can actually mean 'forth-give', that is, to dismiss absolutely from thought. What God forgives He forgets.*"

Why must forgiveness be a constant attitude?

Here is the answer as presented straight from Jesus:

The Story Explained

A king calls in his CPA and runs an audit (v 23). These may be probable fees or taxes his servant stewards collected for the king. One man is a little slow to respond.

He doesn't have it. How much does he owe? 10,000 Talents!

The total recorded taxes paid to the Roman Empire by Judea, Idumea, Samaria, Galilee, and Peria was 800 Talents.

If they were silver talents they were worth about 10 million dollars, or 10 times Herod the Great's annual tax revenue. If they were gold talents, they equaled 150 million dollars.

What's the point? *IT IS AN UN PAYABLE DEBT!*

Act I: The King and the Slave

Justice

King calmly looks at the debt, the slave's assets and gives the order, "Sell the slave, his wife, his children, and all of his possessions to recover a small amount of my loss."

The servant begs for mercy, "Give me time, I'll repay." How ridiculous. The debt is huge. *There is no way he can pay.*

Mercy

Until now the king was strictly business, no emotion, no anger, no revenge, but now he is moved with compassion. He not only lets him go free and keep his wife, and family, he cancels the entire debt. *He is free and debt free.*

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Act II: The Slave and a Fellow Slave

Justice

The forgiven slave left his king and immediately bumped into another slave who owed him 100 denarii worth about \$20.00 but was worth more than 3 months wages then.

He grabbed him by the throat and demanded payment.

The slave begged for mercy saying "I will repay, just give me time," and you know what? *He could easily repay the debt.*

Mercy

The forgiven slave shows no mercy on his fellow slave.

He drags him off to court and has him thrown into jail until he and his family can work off the debt.

Act III: The King and Forgiven Slave (He made the wrong decision)

Justice

Fellow slaves tell the king what the forgiven slave has done.

The king rescinds his pardon, sends him to jail to work and be beaten (the debt literally taken out of his hide) until his debt is paid, and remember, *it can never be paid off.*

Mercy

Why the violent reaction by the king?

Justice gave the slave the right to demand his money, but mercy demanded that he give time to pay, or better yet, forgive the debt altogether.

Verse 33 holds the key:

"Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?"

In Greek it reads literally, "Where you not bound!"--"Didn't he very nature of the case, understood at its most basic level obliges, you to forgive."

The Story Applied

A. Judgment is always deserved

The forgiven slave was right by the "letter of the law."

Neil Lightfoot wrote, *"How easy it is to see other's faults. mistakes in others are sins, in us they are faults. What is mean in others is mischief in ourselves; harshness in others is frankness in ourselves; selfishness in others is thrift in ourselves."*

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Perhaps the best example is the man in Matthew 7 trying to take a speck out of his brother's eye with a plank in his own.

B. Mercy is always undeserved

The king forgave an unforgivable debt.

God forgave our sin debt which was more than we could ever repay.

Our forgiveness and joy at others reconciliation's with God should be based on God's supernatural working in us which generally goes against all we naturally feel and do.

C. Forgiveness is always commanded

The heart of this parable is not teaching God's forgiveness of man but our response to that act, OUR FORGIVENESS OF ONE ANOTHER.

Matthew 5:7, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*"

Recite: The Lord's Prayer--Luke 11:2-4 (using the word debts).