

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Road Map

September 17, 2023

Peace Ev. Lutheran Church - King of Prussia, PA

Matthew 18:21-35

Rev. Roger W Huffman, Vacancy Pastor

God's forgiveness frees us to forgive from the heart.

- ❖ Peter got it - God's kingdom is about forgiveness.
 - So he asked: *Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?*
 - Peter got it - **almost!** This parable opened his heart to **real** forgiveness.
- ❖ We also know that our Holy Christian Faith is about forgiveness.
 - We get it - **almost!** We get that it is about God forgiving us.
 - Then we hear: *This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.* Uh-oh!
 - *Lord, help me! Teach me - empower me to forgive from the heart.*

Where do we turn to get such a forgiving heart? Where else, but to...
the King's mind-boggling over-the-top forgiveness for us.

God's forgiveness frees us to forgive from the heart.

1. Lord, set me free from my self-absorbed focus.

Diagnose the source of the unmerciful servant's unforgiving heart.

- ❖ Observe his focus:
 - *Have mercy on me, and I will pay back everything.*
 - Focus: not on his debt to his Lord, but on saving his own neck.
 - Later, note the same focus: *Pay back what you owe me!*
 - Sin's self-absorbed nature blinded him from seeing the mind-boggling mercy of his King.
 - ◆ He wasn't a servant.
 - ◆ He saw himself as his own lord. Life was all about him and his.
- ❖ The self-absorbed trivialize their debt with the Heavenly King.
 - That's the only way sinners can think highly of themselves - live with themselves.
 - This trivializes God's amazing mercy - leaving their hearts totally unaffected.
- ❖ Pray: *Lord, daily set me free from my self-absorbed focus.*
 - Use the Word to daily take ownership of your lording mindset - your sin's debt.
 - Daily drink in the sweet debt-erasing-mercy of Jesus. Treasure it!

2. Lord, set me free from my justice focus.

Further diagnosis of the source of the unmerciful servant's unforgiving heart.

- ❖ Observe his focus:
 - *he found one of his fellow servants ... grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' ... he... had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.*
 - Focus: **justice!** What's fair according to the law. He didn't see a person in need.

- ❖ Remember: the Heavenly King found a way to be **both fair and merciful**.
 - *Mercy is having a heart for someone in a pitiful condition.*
 - God saw our pitiful helpless condition. We couldn't pay any debt, let alone our infinite debt.
 - Mercy moved God to send his beloved Son to fully pay the debt of our sin - everyone's sin.
 - ***It is finished! = Paid in Full!***
 - God paid the debt we could not pay, so he might **justly show us mercy**. What love!
 - *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, . . . it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.* 1 Cor. 13:5
 - ♦ God's love **never keeps a ledger book of wrongs**.
 - ♦ His forgiveness wiped our debt totally clean. He says, "What debt?"
 - Pray: ***Lord, set me free from my justice focus.***
- ❖ Treasuring this good news we pray, ***Lord, change me!***
 - ...from a **justice-driven-focus on fair** to a **mercy-driven-focus on care**.
 - Since Jesus forgave my debt and theirs, I wipe my copy of their ledger clean!
 - Practice empathy. I've been ruled by sin. My heart goes out to them.
 - Stop holding court in your heart. Case dismissed. In Christ, I forgive.
 - ♦ Face the fact of the sin and its hurt. Don't ignore. Face it, then let go.
 - ♦ *Let go, so love can flow.* Resentment leaves no room for love.
 - ♦ Begin to forgive right away, lest their sin takes you captive and causes you to sin.
 - ♦ This sets us free from letting others control our joy, happiness, and peace.

3. Focus: Forgive to free hearts from sin.

- ❖ **The goal** is to free your heart and theirs from sin through forgiveness.
 - When mercy reigns in your heart - you are set free.
 - Christ-like mercy forgives in the heart and shows mercy.
 - ♦ Their sin and injury don't get in the way of me caring for them.
 - ♦ Mercy seeks to set them free from captivity to sin.
 - ♦ Mercy can't pronounce God's forgiveness to the impenitent. They despise God's mercy.
 - To those who ask you to forgive them, *I already forgave you in my heart. Yes, I forgive you. Why? Because of the mercy God has shown us. May I tell you about this? Is there any way I can support or encourage you in your struggle with sin?*
 - **New focus:** mercy seeks to set free from the pitiful condition of captivity to sin
 - The key: immerse yourself in the mercy God has shown you.

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