

Scripture Reference: Matthew 18:21-35

Date: January 5, 2014

Title: "New Every Morning"

Focus: Forgiveness as it is.

Intro:

1. Peter's question is simple in its composition and its relevance, "How many times shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?" How many of us have pondered this same question?

2. As an expression of religion or morality, we try to come up with an answer that is reasonable, virtuous, but also attainable.

3. As Jesus makes clear, the problem is, our attempts fall woefully short. This point Jesus makes by way of direct statement and the use of a parable.

Body:

Does Forgiveness Have a Limit? - vv. 21-22

Jesus was talking to the disciples about their responsibility to a person who is sinning (vv. 15-20).

As inevitably comes up when talking about living in the Kingdom, disciples ask, "How far am I expected to go?" Peter's question was, "Shall I forgive him up to seven times?"

The expectation to forgive three times comes from the teaching of the Rabbis during the Babylonian captivity. It may have something to do with the practice of praying three times a day.

Peter's upped this to seven times. Maybe this reflects the Hebrew appreciation for the fact that seven is associated with a completed set, such as seven days being a full week.

In general, when in prayer it is good to pray for those in sin.

But Jesus did not comment on this. Instead, He reveals that such forgiveness is not good enough. He pushes forgiveness beyond the extreme of human understanding

Man's Best is not Good Enough - vv. 23-27

Jesus creates a situation where forgiveness is not to be granted, as we understand it. Nor is it exercised where we think appropriate.

Forgiveness, He tells them, is to be given "*seventy times seven*." This is not 490 times. Instead it is a forgiveness beyond what the offender "*has the means to repay*" (v. 25).

This is forgiveness given for the same sin repeatedly committed within the course of one day. It is forgiveness that is beyond the limits of human patience and reason.

For you see, in this statement, Jesus reveals to us that forgiveness is a divine institution.

Forgiveness exists because God first showed it to us. It is a part of His character and is therefore a concept humanity can appreciate and exercise.

The parable illustrates that the servant understood and experienced forgiveness because the king showed it to him (vv. 23-27).

Forgiveness is not mankind showing his grace. Forgiveness is sharing the grace he has been shown.

How is it God can be So Forgiving? - vv. 27-35

No matter the sin, regardless of how far the transgression, God is willing and able to forgive. Even though a way out can't be seen, God has made a way, through the death of Jesus.

We have trouble fathoming such forgiveness because, as the parable shows, it is not the type we grant one another (vv. 27-30).

However, this is the forgiveness He shows, and the forgiveness He makes available to His disciples to spread around.

But, why, how, can this be so? It is possible because God's faithfulness and compassion are inexhaustible. They are "new every morning."

Lam 3:22-23; *"The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."*

Closing:

1. Today is a new day for you. God's forgiveness is fresh and ready for you to avail yourself of. Reject His mercy, fail to live in the embrace of His forgiveness, and you are left to pay your own debt (vv. 31-35).

2. Today a fresh supply of grace is available to expend lavishly on those who are in need of forgiveness. If you profess to be a disciple of Jesus, is this the mercy you show to others? If His presence is in you, it is to be.