

Men's Bible Study – Wednesday, September 9, 2020 (11am) – Pentecost XIV

TEXT: Genesis 50:15-21 – “Providence and the Good Purposes of God!”

1. Coming at the end of the Joseph narrative (Genesis 37-50), this episode in which Joseph's brothers seek his forgiveness is not as straightforward as it seems. Joseph tried getting even with his brothers (**payback**) but found no satisfaction in revenge and evening the score. Only mercy and forgiveness brought healing to the soul of Joseph. The brother's continuing guilt and their fear of Joseph's “**getting even**” is amazing. When Joseph first revealed his identity, he sought to put to rest the brothers' fear of retaliation. “Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for **God sent me here to preserve life**” (45:6). Joseph has already forgiven them, and there would seem to be little reason to include a second reconciliation scene. But much has happened since then. With Jacob's death, retaliation becomes possible; has Joseph been nursing a grudge all along?
2. The death of Dad (Jacob) creates a crisis. Perhaps Joseph has just been waiting to get even (I don't get mad, I just get even...all in due time) with his brothers. Pay Back Time? Leon Kass sees the **brothers' petition** (dad said) as one last act of deception and Joseph's answer as an artful dodge. Asking first in their father's words and then in their own, **the brothers throw themselves on Joseph's mercy**, abjectly declaring, “We are your slaves!” At one time they had bowed to the Prince of Egypt, ironically fulfilling Joseph's childhood dream; now they do so in full recognition of his identity, and their crime.
3. **Forgiveness doesn't minimize sin.** “**You meant it for evil.**” But forgiveness recognizes the presence and goodness of God—in everything God works for good—Romans 8. It is not Joseph's place to judge or to forgive. Sin is against God. **Final word:** “So do not fear! I will provide for you.”

TEXT: Matthew 18:21-35 – “KNOW MERCY” ... “Am I Forgiving?” ... “As We Forgive!”

1. Outline: **The question** by Peter and Jesus' answer (vv. 21-22); The three-part parable and conclusion (vv. 23-35) - a. The king and the servant (vv. 23-27) - b. The servant and fellow servants (vv. 28-31) - c. The king and the servant (vv. 32-34) - d. Conclusion (v. 35). Our Gospel Reading begins with Peter's question. **Last week**, Matthew 18:1-20 began with a question: “Who is **the GREATEST** in the Kingdom of Heaven? Jesus offers a Children's Sermon. We must become as a child (humble; down-to-earth; owned property of God) if we are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
2. Chapter 18 is **Jesus' Sermon on Church Life**—sin and forgiveness. Chapter 18 falls in the section of Matthew 16-20. Chapter 18 is “Matthew's advice to a divided, conflictive community”. The table is set with the opening question: “Who is **the greatest** in the kingdom of heaven?”—the THEME of Chapter 18. This chapter is not about our relationship with the world, but instead about a Christian's relationship with others in the fellowship/church (Insiders). Compare Peter's question here with the **parallel in**

Luke 17:3-4. Does repentance need to precede forgiveness? Forgiving the other doesn't restore the relationship, but it needs to precede any chance of reconciliation. Does the King reinstate the debt of 10,000 talents? No, **the slave now has a new debt**. One who can't forgive must be locked up until the new debt is fully paid.

3. There is **a drama/play based on this text** called, "**Seventy times Seven Equals Four-Hundred-Ninety, But Then...POW!**" In the play the husband has a chalkboard in his apartment where he is keeping count of the number of times he has forgiven his wife. Every time she would do something that would upset him, such as having scrambled eggs on Sunday, when she knows that Sunday is the day for eggs sunny-side-up, the husband would yell a little bit, then take off his glasses, walk over to the board, but on a white glove, pick up the piece of chalk, place another mark on the board, and say, "I forgive you." Then he puts down the chalk, takes off the white glove, puts on his glasses and exuberantly walks back to where he was. I am fairly certain that forgiving **490 times (or 77 times)** and then...POW is not what Jesus had in mind. **Boring** (in the Matthew Commentary, New Interpreters Bible) **writes:** "Whoever counts has not forgiven at all, but is only biding his or her time (1 Cor. 13:5)" [p. 380]. Not all translations will capture the connection in the reference 1 Cor. 13, which is literally: "[love] does not keep a record of wrong." Love does not keep count. Having **trouble forgiving someone?**
4. **Application:** Binding and Loosing! We are to forgive as we have been forgiven. Put the calculator/score card away. There can be no mercy for those who do not know/practice mercy to others—this is the Kingdom requirement of God. **A Talent was a monetary unit worth about 15-20 years of labor** (A talent contained about six thousand denarii; therefore a thousand talents contain sixty million denarii, of which how small a part are one hundred denarii!). **10,000 talents** (150,000-200,000 years of labor) would be an impossible debt to repay. The slave who is forgiven 10,000 talents demands payment from a fellow slave who owes him 100 denarii (100 days of labor)...a repayable debt. Seen through **the eyes of God**, a sinner's life is worth more than 10,000 talents. Seen through **the eyes of a fellow sinner**, 100 denarii is worth more than a sinner's life. Forgiveness in the Gospel of Matthew is not only relational it is reciprocal and reliant. When teaching his disciples to pray Jesus would have us say, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (**Matthew 6:12-15**). This fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer is echoed in the lesson of this parable about the Kingdom of Heaven, reflecting it back in reverse. We ought to forgive as our King (Master) has forgiven us, Jesus says. **"You can't get/keep what you don't give**. God's forgiveness exceeds both our deserving and our comprehension. Forgiveness, which we receive from God our King, in the person of Jesus, is what our King expects from his subjects in their dealings with each other. **AS WE FORGIVE!** Forgiveness is a WORK as well as a GRACE. In 1st Corinthians 13:5, it is noted that LOVE (agape) does not keep score: "Love keeps no record of wrongs!" **Hymn:** "Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive, You taught us Lord to pray...."