

Matthew 18:21-35

Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times." For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

I have struggled with this passage for years. Probably because I have struggled with things like forgiveness for just about as long. Judith McDaniel: "Find the pebble in your shoe."

I keep coming back to the old prayer book language of the confession:

We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable.

Forgiveness is difficult.

You can't have true restoration of community without first true forgiveness.
Forgiveness is the first step in restoring relationship.

What is God about over the course of all of creation? Relationship.

God has gone to incredible lengths to create relationship with creation. Even dying on a cross to forgive all of the sins for the whole world for all of eternity.

Parable—hyperbole to get our attention.

Talent is 130 pounds of silver, about 15 years wages for the slave.

Slave owed 150,000 YEARS of service, or 1.3 million pounds of silver

By comparison the second slave owed about 100 days of labor.

Jesus uses such hyperbole not because he wants us to be like the king, but because we need to remember that we are like that first slave.

Good News: I don't have to forgive in the way that the king does.

Which is good because I'm not sure that I am capable of that.

What we have to do is to remember that we have been forgiven.

We have all been forgiven the massive debt, we have all been forgiven so, so much.

That forgiveness flows from God's love for us, grace. And if we are loved on such a massive scale, our job then isn't to forgive on that ridiculous scale, but rather to live into that awe-inspiring gift of grace that we've been given.

Today we give that awe-inspiring gift of God's love and forgiveness to Capri.

"The failure of the first servant isn't simply that he won't forgive his comrade, but that he has just experienced an utterly unexpected, completely beyond-his-wildest-dreams, **life-changing moment of grace and seems absolutely untouched by it. And for this reason, he lives devoid of any sense of gratitude. His whole life changed...and he didn't even notice.**"

And here's the good news: **forgiveness is God's gift, not God's expectation.** But we have to live into that gift. Sometimes we may not be able to forgive like the king in the parable...but we should try to remember that we have been forgiven on such a massive scale by the creator of all that is, seen and unseen. And with that in mind perhaps we can find ourselves more able in return to show mercy and forgiveness and love towards others." David Lose

When we do that we are restoring community, or at least taking the very first steps down the road towards restoration, towards wholeness.

And even when we cannot forgive the other, and that does happen, we need to remember that our failings are not God's failings. God can forgive even when we struggle to do so. That means that forgiveness is still possible, and sometimes that is enough. **"the very possibility of forgiveness – again, whether God's or ours – in turn creates sheer possibility: things do not always have to be the way they are. And I find that not only comforting, but uplifting and empowering."** David Lose

Challenge this week to forgive someone, knowing we are forgiven, especially because we are so loved we are so forgiven.