

## **“Forgiveness”**

Matthew 18:21-35

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Matthew 18:21-35

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times."

<sup>23</sup>"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. <sup>24</sup>When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' <sup>27</sup>And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup>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.' <sup>29</sup>Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' <sup>30</sup>But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. <sup>31</sup>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. <sup>32</sup>Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup>Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' <sup>34</sup>And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. <sup>35</sup>So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Prayer.

Forgiveness.

It sounds so easy.

As if it were some means of mathematics

some method of mending broken relationships.

“Seven times,” Peter purposely exaggerated.

“Seventy-seven times,” Jesus intentionally did not.

The forgiveness that is easiest

is the forgiveness that is withheld.

Pride is the only barrier.

Pride falleth the man,

and causes streets to run red with blood.

Streets of Gaza, Bagdad and Rochester

run red with blood

channeled only by the pride of arrogance

encouraged by hate.

“He hurt me first”

“She drew first blood”  
“It’s a matter of justice,” we cry  
as we cite the old eye-for-an-eye saw  
and ignore the command of our Lord.  
Pride is the only barrier.  
So sit on it.  
Suck it up.  
Get over it.  
What ever it takes.  
As Nike would say,  
Forgiveness,  
-just do it.

If only it were this easy.  
The more difficult path  
seeks the forgiveness of the one  
against whom we have sinned.  
We are forced to face the fact  
of our sin  
of our imperfection  
that I was wrong  
and my sin has hurt another.

For those who dare answer the call  
penance is our staff  
sturdy and true.  
Humility is our posture  
bent and broken.  
Love is our strength;  
a heart shared by a Savior  
who gives us  
a desire to no longer live bent and broken.

To seek the forgiveness of another  
recognizes the fact that we are not in control.  
It is not up to us to loose or bind  
to heal or to kill.  
It brings us face-to-face  
with “the least of these”  
with a request for repair  
with a beg for mercy  
and leaves us with the humid silence

for which there is no cure.

We wait for a heart to warm.  
Perhaps we wait for a heart to be warmed.

To seek the forgiveness of another  
requires us to place our trust in God.  
We trust that God will move and shake.  
We trust  
God will warm  
and cause a heart to change.  
We trust  
God will act  
and a mind will be opened to the creative possibility.

When we seek the forgiveness of another  
we trust that God will  
begin to sew back together  
that which was torn.  
God will bring healing  
where there was once hurt.  
God will bring the sleep of amnesia  
and the memory of brokenness will cease to be.

Forgiveness  
just give it away.  
As it has been given to you  
just give it away.  
With-hold not,  
and it will not be withheld.  
Trust  
that God will show us  
a new way  
to a brand new day.

Forgiveness  
may it be so.

The Word of the Lord. As it has come to me. Thanks be to God. Amen.