



But, they don't deserve to be forgiven!

Exodus 14:19-31 | Psalm 114 | Romans 14:1-14 | Matthew 18:21-35

"I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?" Matthew 18:32

I'd like to share with you the story of one my mother's friends. I have known this lady for most of my life, and her children were friends of mine when I attended an Anglican church in Sydney. We'll call her, Kerry.

Kerry and her husband had an excellent reputation in our community. Early on, when their three sons were still young, they adopted two orphan girls from Malaysia. By the time I was a teenager, they were all part of my fellowship group. When I was about 16, it became known, that Kerry's husband had developed a sexual relationship with one of his adopted daughters. The drama devastated the entire community, and after the court case, Kerry's husband was sent to jail for a number of years.

Several years later, I found myself travelling through my own divorce. Like any divorce, it was a harrowing time. I felt enormous anger, betrayal and bitterness toward my ex-husband. I began attending a new church, and several of my new friends, upon learning that I was recently divorced, proceeded to tell me that I needed to forgive my husband for his past behaviour. The very thought horrified me. But the longer I delayed forgiving him, the angrier and more bitter I became.

Broken hearted I questioned, "how can I forgive him? He is not repentant; He has shown no remorse – there is no way he deserves my forgiveness."

The more my new friends talked about forgiveness, the angrier I became. As they chatted over their coffees about how hard it was to forgive their husbands for picking up his dirty socks, I inwardly thought – "you have no idea what you're talking about!"

Well the months dragged on and the more cynical and critical I became of everything. Inwardly, I knew I needed to forgive my ex-husband, but the ability to do so, seemed impossible.

Suddenly, I thought, "I need to talk to someone who has actually had to forgive someone of something big – something really serious – and immediately, the name of my mother's friend Kerry, floated into my mind."

God provided the messenger. But was I ready to receive the message?

Keep in mind, I had spent my entire life in church, I knew my Bible very well. I thought I knew all about forgiveness.

But, C.S. Lewis wisely acknowledged, "Forgiveness is a beautiful word until, you have something to forgive."

What Kerry taught me is the same lesson that Jesus taught Peter.

Slide 2 | Let's turn to Matthew 18. Jesus is in the middle of teaching his disciples about forgiveness and Peter, again, interrupts him.

"Lord, how often should I forgive a person who sins against me? (v21)

I wonder if Peter had someone specific in mind ... maybe one of the other disciples had done something to hurt him - again and again and again. Surely, forgiving them three, four or five times was enough? 'But, [Peter thought] I'll add a few more for good measure. I'll use the number representing perfection, that will impress Jesus!'

"Seven times?"

But Jesus astounds Peter answering, **"No, not seven times, but seventy times seven."** (v 22)

I can imagine Peter's face turning white. So, Jesus tells him story like this.

Slide 3 |

There was a man called Bill, who for years had been living the high life **on credit** - buying a fleet of Maserati's, Porsches, and BMWs, mortgaging mansions in France, Beverly Hills, and of course his penthouse in New York. He flew from party to party, staying in the 5-star hotels, of course, always travelling first class. But, one day, his bank manager, Mr Stern, call him for a meeting. His debt had accumulated to such a degree, it was time to settle the accounts.

Slide 4 |

When Bill arrives at the bank, however, he is horrified to discover, that his debt has swelled into the billions. Mr Stern tells him his days of living the high life were over, the bank was going to seize his home, and send him to prison.

Bill, in his desperation, falls on his knees and pleads with Mr Stern,

"Please be patient with me, and I will repay it."

Repay a billion dollar debt! The man has no idea how preposterous that suggestion is.

Slide 5 | Point 1 | God is the King. We are the servant who has an unimaginable debt against our name.

There is no way he can pay the debt back. There are not enough days of the year to pay back the debt.

No human-made construction could bridge that gap.

No matter how hard he worked. No matter how many good deeds he performed.

No matter how many times he went to church.

There is no way, he could ever pay back the debt he owed.

Slide 6 | Point 2 | God the King mercifully cancelled our humongous debt, although we were completely undeserving.

However, unlike any bank owner I have ever known, Mr Stern reports that the Son of the owner of the bank,

“was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.” (v 27)

Now, Bill, I think you’ll agree, should have gone out and told everyone about the outrageously gracious gift he had just been given.

But, now we start to see what Bill is like on the inside – in his heart.

As soon as he left the bank, he saw out of the corner of his eye, a man named Joe, who owed him just \$20.

All of embarrassment of having his highlife stripped away starts to boil up, and overflowing with greed, he **“grabs the guy by his throat and demands instant payment.”** (v28).

Although Joe pleaded with Bill to forgive him of the measly \$20 he owed, Bill’s vindictive nature caused him to get Joe arrested and thrown into prison (v30).

Well, thankfully just eyes witnessed Bill’s mistreatment of Joe, and Bill was brought back before Mr Stern, who calls the police, throws Bill into prison, where he would live in torture until his debt was finally paid (v31-34).

Jesus finished his story, declaring:

Slide 7 | Point 3 | God the King expects us to show grace and forgiveness to others, just as He has shown grace and forgiveness to us.

“That’s what my heavenly father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.” (v35)

Ooooh, that’s hard for us to hear.

... But just a few minutes ago, we prayed,

“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” (Matthew 6:12-24)

Let’s now apply this story to our lives.

At the beginning of the message I told you the story of my own struggle with forgiveness.

It was this parable that Kerry pointed out to me.

Slide 8 | Walking in Forgiveness | Admit your need for God’s forgiveness

Instead of accusing my ex-husband, that he did not deserve to be forgiven.

I needed to admit in my heart, that I did not deserve to be forgiven.

When we call to our remembrance God’s mercy in forgiving all our own evil thoughts, our own selfish motives, our retaliating actions, our unkind words, we realise that we do not have the right to stand as judge against other person.

Slide 9 | Walking in Forgiveness | Receive God’s forgiveness for your sins.

In humility we receive God’s offer of forgiveness for ourselves, knowing that we do not deserve God’s grace and mercy.

Knowing this, Paul’s words in Ephesians convict us, **“be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”** (4:32, Colossians 3:13)

If God forgives us of so much, how then, can we refuse to forgive others of so little?

Slide 10 | Walking in Forgiveness | The choice to forgive another sets THEM free

When we forgive, we choose to set the person who offended us free. We choose to not hold onto the resentment, the bitterness, or the anger.

We let go of our plans for retaliation, and our plans for pay-back.

We let go of the feeling that they owe us something – even an apology.

Instead we give them the gift of forgiveness. We set them free.

It does not mean that we forget; we just refuse to bring it up or hold it against them. It doesn’t mean we immediately start to trust them, but rather we let God the Father deal with them about these issues.

Slide 11 | Walking in Forgiveness | The choice to forgive another sets YOU free

I’m not the first to say, ‘unforgiveness is the poison you drink everyday hoping that the other person will die.’

When we forgive, we also set ourselves free. It is often the case that the person that caused our pain has no idea of the pain they caused. They may not even know that it is still an issue – or they may have even died.

The person most effected by unforgiveness is always the person who has not yet forgiven.

Slide 12 | Application | Who do you need to forgive?

In my journey of forgiving my ex-husband – and yes, it was a journey - the hardest thing to release him from was my desire to receive an apology. I wanted to hear him say “I was wrong.”

So, far, it has never come. Does, that mean I can’t forgive him?

No! Forgiveness says, “your wrongs are between you and God.”

I forgive you because my Heavenly Father has forgiven me.

A step towards forgiveness will always be difficult and uncomfortable.

But it will also always be a courageous step towards your own freedom.

To whom do you need to offer the gift of forgiveness?

*Heavenly Father, we all struggle with unforgiveness. We find it hard to admit to ourselves that many times we are like the unmerciful servant. May your Word penetrate deep into our hearts. Grant that we may discover the freedom that comes from forgiving those who hurt us. Break the chain of remembered hurts that binds us to the past. Lord, we want to do it, but we lack the courage. Show us what we must do and then give us the strength to do it. **Amen.***

If you regularly attend Sunday Services, please complete the following questionnaire:

What service time best suits you?

It has been very encouraging seeing more people attend our Sunday worship services. For two weeks we have been close to full capacity (which is 30 people). Accordingly, we are now considering the feasibility of having two services on Sunday. Please note that the worship space needs to be thoroughly cleaned between services. Cleaning takes approximately one hour.

Name: _____ and _____

The time we would choose to attend a church service is at: 8 am 10.30 am

I/We plan to attend this service on a weekly basis: Yes No Unlikely

(With flexibility for times when not feeling well or other commitments)

DAY 6	My eyes see the King's beauty	19 th September
<i>Beautiful words stir in my heart. I will recite a poem about the King, for my tongue is like the pen of a skilful poet. Psalm 45.1</i>		Further study: Psalm 46
<p>“ <i>My Lord loves justice and hates evil. Therefore, God has anointed you.</i> ”</p>	<p>This describes a royal wedding. The king is humble yet majestic, gracious yet terrible, but the language runs to shocking extremes. In verses 6–7 the king is called God. The book of Hebrews (1:8–9) says this is Christ himself, the ultimate King, infinitely high yet humble (verse 4). And in verse 7 we have a glimpse of the ascension, when Jesus, after accomplishing our salvation, is given the throne of the world by the Father, to rule and direct all things until evil and suffering are destroyed (Ephesians 1:20–23; 1 Corinthians 15:25). We should be as smitten with his beauty as a new spouse—for that is what we are (Ephesians 5:25–32).</p>	
<p>Lord, Isaiah 33:17 says, “Your eyes will see the king in his beauty”— and in this psalm, with the eyes of faith, I can indeed see your Son humble and weak yet powerful and majestic. Only because he was both divine and human could your Son save me, and for that I am grateful forever. Amen.</p>		



Tim Keller’s “The Songs of Jesus”
A Year of Daily Devotionals in the Psalms has been used.

This is a devotional resource created for
Southlakes Anglican Church community.

www.southlakes.org.au



Week 8: I choose to wear the powerful armour of God!

DAY 1	I boast only in the Lord	14 th September
<i>I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart. Psalm 34:2</i>		Further study: Philippians 4:19

“
I will praise the Lord at all times. I will speak his praises.
”

How can we be delivered from all our fears (v 4)? The answer is comprehensive. Build an identity that gets its significance (“glory”)—makes its “boast” (Jer 9:23–24)—not from your accomplishments or racial identity or talent or moral efforts or family but from God (v 2). Then and only then is the foundation of your self-worth secure and not subject to fears or shame (v 5). How can we get such an identity? By not just believing in God but “tasting” and experiencing God’s goodness in prayer (verse 8). And by comforting afflicted people with the comfort we have received (v 2; 2 Corinthians 1:3–4) until they can glorify God with us (v 3). This is the mission of every believer.

Lord, my anxieties, shame, and discouragement come when I try to make my boast in other things than your goodness and unfailing love toward me. Teach me how to look to you and seek you until I know the radiance of your joy. **Amen.**

Application: What particular anxieties and cares are you holding on to, that need to be entrusted to the Lord?

DAY 2	I won't fret about the wicked	15 th September
<i>Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. Ps 37:7</i>		Further study: Psalm 31
“ <i>Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.</i> ”	“Fretting” is a common activity of our age. It is composed of worry, resentment, jealousy, and self-pity. It is dominant online. It chews us up inside while accomplishing nothing. David gives three practical remedies. Look forward (verse 2)—those whose main happiness is found in this world are living on borrowed time. Look upward (verses 3–5)—neither repress nor vent your frustrations but redirect them to God. Leave your burdens in his hand (“commit”) and learn to find your heart’s deepest desires in who he is and what he has done (“delight”). Finally, get busy with the things that must be done—“do good” (verse 3). Self-pity can lead you to cut corners ethically. Don’t add a bad conscience to a heavy heart.	
Father, I worry that I am getting a worse life than I deserve and others are getting better ones. But your son, Jesus, did not begrudge me a far better life than I deserve in your grace or his blood shed to secure it. Make me generous to others and content in your great love. Amen.		

DAY 3	I am guilty, but forgiven	16 th September
<i>My guilt overwhelms me – it is a burden too heavy to bear. Psalm 38:4</i>		Further study: Psalm 5&6
“ <i>For I am waiting for you, O Lord, You must answer me, O Lord my God.</i> ”	Here there is guilt (verse 4) as well as sickness (verse 5). The illness is linked to the psalmist’s sin in some way, either as the physical effects of a tortured conscience or as the result of some foolish behaviour or as a messenger sent to humble the psalmist and bring him to his senses about the way he is living. This illness in turn has isolated him from friends and given his opponents an opportunity to move against him (see verses 11–12). So he is suffering from guilt, bodily pain, and injustice. Suffering often comes in such overwhelmingly complex compounds that the only solution is to simply call out to God himself to forgive, protect, and heal.	
Lord, sometimes there’s nothing to do but cry to you. I can feel so overwhelmed by the complexity of my troubles. Some are my fault, some are not—I feel angry and guilty and overwhelmed by it all. I confess my sin and my helplessness. Help me! Amen.		

DAY 4	I will wait patiently	17 th September
<i>I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. Psalm 40:1</i>		Further study: Psalm 191
“ <i>I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart.</i> ”	Most translations of verse one say, “I waited patiently,” but the Hebrew literally says “I waited-waited.” In Hebrew the doubling of a term conveys intensification and magnitude. This means not passivity but great concentration. Servants waiting on a great lord are not twiddling their thumbs but watching every expression and gesture to discern their master’s will. Waiting on God, then, is to be busy in service to God and to others, all in full acceptance of his wisdom and timing. That kind of waiting may indeed be long and excruciating, as Psalms 37 through 39 have shown us. But finally it leads to a new song of praise to God (verse 3) and joy (verse 4).	
Lord, I remember with deep gratitude some of those slimy pits you lifted me from and those firm rocks you put me upon. And that helps me wait for you again now. Amen.		

DAY 5	I am mindful of the poor	18 th September
<i>Oh the joys of those who are kind to the poor! The Lord rescues them when they are in trouble. Ps 41.1</i>		Further study: Psalm 44
“ <i>The Lord nurses the sick and restores them to health.</i> ”	To “have regard for the weak” (verse 1) means giving sustained reflection to the poor. This is far more than donating to charity. The call is to think hard about what keeps the poor down and work to help them. Those who do this will be blessed—spiritual health and favour will come to them. When they sin they get mercy as they have shown mercy (verse 4). This also works in reverse. It is because we have received radical spiritual generosity that we can be radically generous with those in need (Matthew 18:28–33; 2 Corinthians 8:7–9). A sign that I have been saved by grace is that I care about the poor. Do I have that sign? .	
Lord, my culture and my heart tell me that it is wholly due to my hard work that I am not poor. If I believe that lie, I will be ungenerous. I praise you that you are a God with a heart for the poor. Give me the same kind of heart. Amen.		