

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 20 Aug 2023
Sermon Title : The Wicked Slave
Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng
Text : Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35

INTRODUCTION

“The Wicked Slave” is the second of a 3-part sermon series “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”. “The Bad” refers to “The Wicked Slave” in Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving servant who, despite being forgiven a debt which he could never repay, chose not to forgive another fellow slave a much smaller debt.

Why did Jesus tell the ‘Parable of The Wicked Slave’?

Peter asked a question because he sincerely wanted to know how many times he had to forgive a brother who sinned against him. (Matthew 18:21-22)

Bible verse (Matthew 18)	Meaning
“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to <u>seven times</u> ? (v.21)	Peter was being gracious by suggesting up to seven times, as there is a rabbinical teaching that instructs Jews to forgive a person up to three times, but not more.
Jesus responded: “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but <u>seventy times seven</u> ” (v.22)	Jesus knew the human tendency to put a limit on the number of times we forgive others and taught that our forgiveness should be unlimited.

Parable of the Wicked Slave

Jesus tells the parable in Matthew 18:23-34.

Bible verse (Matthew 18)	Meaning
For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his <u>slaves</u> . (v.23)	In the parable, the slaves belong to the king.
When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him <u>ten thousand talents</u> was brought to him. (v.24)	A talent is equal to 6,000 denarii, and a denarii is equal to a day’s wages. 10,000 talents mean the slave owed the king a total of 60 million days’ wages, or 164,000 years of work!

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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Bible verse (Matthew 18)	Meaning
But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. (v.25)	It was not possible for the huge debt to be repaid by selling the slave, his wife and children.
So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ' <u>Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.</u> ' And the lord of that slave felt <u>compassion</u> and released him and <u>forgave</u> him the debt. (vv.26-27)	The slave desperately pleaded for the king's patience. Knowing that the slave will never be able to repay the debt, the king had compassion on him, and fully forgave him.
But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him <u>a hundred denarii</u> ; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying 'Pay back what you owe.' (v.28)	The wicked slave went out and choked a fellow slave who owed a much smaller debt, of about a hundred days' wages. The act of seizing and choking his fellow slave showed how violent the wicked slave was.
So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ' <u>Have patience with me and I will repay you.</u> ' (v.29)	Unlike the wicked slave, it was possible for the fellow slave to repay his debt which was only a hundred days' wages, in about 4 months.
But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison <u>until</u> he should pay back what was owed. (v.30)	The wicked slave was unforgiving. Now that the fellow slave was thrown into prison, there was no way he could repay the debt – unforgiveness does not fulfill.
So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened (v.31)	The other fellow slaves who witnessed the unjust acts of the wicked slave reported it to the king.
Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You <u>wicked slave</u> , I <u>forgave</u> you all that debt because you pleaded with me. (v.32)	The king called him "wicked" because he had forgiven all the wicked slave's ten thousand talent debt, but the wicked slave would not forgive his fellow slave's hundred denarii debt.

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Bible verse (Matthew 18)	Meaning
<p><u>Should you not also</u> have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you? And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. (vv.33-34)</p>	<p>The king's compassion has now given way to anger. The wicked slave is thrown into prison to suffer, for what he did not do, which is to be merciful, gracious and patient in forgiving his fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii.</p>

Application:

- Just like the slaves who belong to the king, we belong to God our Creator and do not deserve anything from Him.
- When Adam and Eve sinned against God, humanity owes God a God-sized debt, just like the enormous debt of 10,000 talents which we can never repay by our own effort.
- Jesus' work on the cross, was a gift from God that forgave us from the huge debt of our sin.
- The fellow slave's debt to the wicked slave symbolizes the offence humans cause one another. While it is no doubt a debt, it is far less than the debt we owe God for our sin.
- Jesus used the strong word "wicked" on the unforgiving slave for not showing mercy, grace and patience by forgiving a smaller debt after having been forgiven a bigger debt. When we accepted Christ as our Lord and Saviour, He forgave us all our sins. The debt we owed for our sins is like the 10,000 talents. If someone offends or hurts us, God requires us to forgive the smaller debt the person owes us.
- In this passage there is a consequence for the unforgiving slave – to be handed over to the torturers. (v.34) This reminds us that there is a consequence for unforgiveness. (v.35) This message is also emphasised in Matthew 6:14-15, "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

CONCLUSION

As recipients of God's grace, forgiveness, patience and compassion, let us be channels of these gifts. Let us also suppress our human tendency to limit our forgiveness and remove any unforgiveness in our hearts.

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. Appoint someone to read Matthew 18:21-35 aloud.
 - a. Discuss what prompted the king to forgive the slave's debt. What does that tell you about God's heart?
 - b. What behaviour do you expect from someone who has been forgiven an enormous sin?

4. Discuss the following characters in Matthew 18:21-35, including their actions. What does it show about their hearts? Which character do you identify with?
 - (i) Peter,
 - (ii) The wicked slave,
 - (iii) The fellow slave who owed a hundred denarii,
 - (iv) The slaves who witnessed the act of the wicked slave and reported it.
 - a. Based on whom you have identified with in question 4, what is one thing you would like to change to be more like the compassionate king?
 - b. How can your group members help or encourage you to achieve 4a. above in the following week(s), until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your testimony on how God has forgiven you, giving thanks to Him.

OR

Give thanks to God for revealing the consequences of unforgiveness so we may seek the Holy Spirit's empowerment to forgive those who have offended or hurt us.

6. With a prayer partner, pray for God to reveal any unforgiveness or hatred in your heart towards others including members in your family, Life Group or our church, asking the Holy Spirit to empower you to repent, forgive and, if possible, reconcile, so you may truly love one another genuinely.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Living Hope – Phil Wickham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f2FXxDVO6w>
2. Mercy – Matt Redman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vcps8EQUOt4>
3. Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) – Chris Tomlin
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MZgXXUW08Q>

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