

Learning to Pray with Jesus: Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Forgive Our Debtors

Matthew 6:5-15, 18:21-35 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 20 March 2022

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: How many credit cards do you have? Which one has the best perks? Or is cash the way to go?

Worship: [Psalm 130](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for [Matt 6:5-15, 18:21-35](#) (*Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

Our Father loves to give good gifts. As James wrote, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father” (1:17). His very nature is lovingkindness and beneficence... and His first and greatest gift to us is forgiveness ([Rom 4:24-25](#), [Ps 103:2-3](#)). We truly have everything if we have Jesus and the forgiveness He brings. And yet it’s astoundingly easy to lose sight of this. “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” speaks to all three elements of our receiving forgiveness:

- > The faith to believe that God loves to forgive us and that forgiveness is ours in Christ,
- > A repentant spirit that continues to confess sin and seek fresh forgiveness and renewal,
- > A prayerful hope that we will be forgiving people ourselves.

The necessary link between God’s forgiveness and our forgiveness of others is reinforced in the verses immediately following the prayer. “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew [6:14-15](#)). Therefore, our forgiveness of others demonstrates – proves, even – that we have received God’s forgiveness, valuing it such that it becomes a way of life. So, how do we become people who pass on God’s forgiveness to others?

Our insurmountable debt has been forgiven // Matthew 18 tells of a servant who owed his king an immense debt. He has no hope of repayment – impossible on his own. Only his king’s unmerited forgiveness could save him. We see ourselves here as we come to recognize the depths of our sin and brokenness, and how we could never overcome its weight. As this sinks in, the glory of the cross shines through as the only path to true, lasting forgiveness. Because God Himself is offering the sacrifice, bearing the weight of our sin in the light of His justice.

The ugliness and absurdity of the forgiven not forgiving others // In the parable, the servant leaves the presence of the king, carrying with him this astounding grace and forgiveness. He runs into a fellow servant who owes him a debt. It’s significant, but nothing compared to what the first servant owed the king. Instead of extending the grace he had received, his heart hardens and violently demands repayment.

Whom are we unwilling to forgive? Do we see the ugliness in this ([Matt 18:32](#))? When we are unwilling to release someone from the bonds of their wrongdoings, it shows we’re not living inside or embodying Gospel forgiveness – forsaking the grace that could be ours. As NT Wright wrote, “If you’re still counting how many times you’ve forgiven someone, you’re not really forgiving them at all.” (This is what Peter asks in [v21-22](#).) And it’s an indication that we still have more forgiveness to seek, so we can finally forgive others as our Father has forgiven us.

The King’s Final Judgment // An unwillingness to forgive others as God forgives us is the great wickedness in this parable. Jesus is warning us that if unforgiveness is our way of life, it is worthy of final punishment ([v33-35](#)). Talk of hell may feel jarring and uncomfortable, and it certainly must have been for Christ’s disciples. But it’s an indication that many of us probably don’t understand the implications of the forgiveness we have received in Christ. This

parable serves as a stark reminder that a lack of forgiveness in our hearts shows a lack of God entering into lives. Because how can the Gospel of God's amazing love and forgiveness *not* compel us to live renewed, generous, gracious lives? Praying "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" is to beg Jesus to cut unforgiveness out of our lives as we remember the amazing, continuing forgiving love of God found in Him.

Discussion Questions (*You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.*)

Our great, insurmountable debt has been forgiven.

- Have you ever been forgiven, or forgiven someone else of a large debt? Describe the experience.
- Has that reality of our Gospel forgiveness felt near to you lately, or has it felt distant?
 - If near, would you be willing to share why this is so and how God has been caring for you?
 - If distant, what has affected your feelings of God's forgiveness. What's a practice you could incorporate into your week to help with that?

The ugliness and absurdity of the forgiven not forgiving others.

- How does the idea of forgiving someone "seventy-seven times" feel to you?
 - What are some practical implications for such infinite forgiveness?
- Are there people in your life right now whom you are an unforgiving servant toward?
 - Pause and pray together for those whose hearts have been hardened – whether in your group, in our church or in the world.

The King's final judgment.

- How is the radical forgiveness of the Gospel different from how the world operates?
 - What do you think made it difficult for the first servant to give forgiveness even after he had experienced such immense forgiveness himself?
- What does it look like to "*forgive with your heart*" as Jesus instructs at the end of the parable?
 - How might this differ from other ways of forgiving?

Prayer

Pray for the situation in Ukraine, for peace, Christ's mercies and intervention. Pray for our Pastoral search process. Pray for new and non-believers to attend the Christianity Explored Classes. For this week's Prayer Guide for personal or group use, click [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Prayer & Gratitude

Share any experiences you have had with Prayer Walking. What surprised you? What encouraged you? What made you uncomfortable? How did you pray differently? How did it enhance your prayer time?

This week, work through the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:3-17](#)) to guide you in prayers of confession and forgiveness. See the resource [A Simple Way to Pray](#) by Martin Luther [HERE](#).