

01/07/18 @ BUCYRUS UMC

TITLE: GET IT THEN GIVE IT

TEXT: MATTHEW 18:21-35

GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 50:14-21

I – JOSEPH:

The story of Joseph goes like this. His father, Jacob, who later was known as Israel, had twelve sons. He had these sons between three wives and one of their servants. These twelve boys would become the twelve tribes of Israel.

We know that parents are not supposed to have favorites. But Jacob was either unaware of such rules or just plain didn't care because he had a clear favorite...his name was Joseph. He treated Joseph better than the other eleven and because of this and because he had a habit of telling dad what the other ones were doing that they shouldn't be doing. Dad even had a special coat of many colors made for him. They just plain hated him! When he told his brothers that he had a dream which said he would be the ruler over all of them they hated him even more than they did before.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were shepherding his vast flocks. As he found them and approached them their anger seethed even more and they decided to kill him. They seized him, ripped off his coat, and threw him into one of the cisterns in the area and left him to die. Instead of letting him die though they pulled him out later and sold him to some slave traders for 20 pieces of silver. They dipped his coat into some goat blood and took it back to Jacob and told him his favorite son was dead. Jacob believed he had been eaten by wild animals.

But that's not what happened. Joseph was taken to Egypt where he was sold to one of Pharaoh's officers who learned to trust him and put him in charge of his household. This lasted until the officer's wife tried to put

the make on Joseph who refused to enter into hanky-panky with her so she yelled rape and he was thrown into prison where he languished for over two years. He finally was called upon by Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, which he did successfully about a coming famine, and before long was overseeing the storing of Egypt's resources for when that day arrived.

When it did arrive his brothers ended up coming to Egypt where he provided them with grain so they would not die of starvation and then made arrangements for them and his father to come to Egypt and live. Everything was fine until Jacob died and the brothers figured out "we're in for it now" but that was not the case. Instead of taking revenge he gave them forgiveness and gave God glory for using their evil for good so he was in a position to save them and others.

II – REVENGE:

Now let's get real for a moment. If you were Joseph and dad was finally out of the picture, would you have been as kind?

They had planned to kill him, then sold him into slavery where he was unjustly accused of rape and thrown in prison for over two years for something he didn't do. They had lied to his father and caused him undue grief and couldn't give Joseph his love. Would you have patted them on the hand and said "there-there, you are forgiven?" Would you have been so nice or would you have sought revenge?

Maybe a night in an empty cistern thinking they were going to die might have been justice. Maybe they should be fed to wild animals and then their bloody clothes gathered together and given to relatives. At the very least I think two years in the same prison he had been in would have been called for.

I think I may have leaned towards wanting revenge...how about you?

III – TEXT:

But that’s not what Jesus calls us to do! Let’s look at what our Lord teaches us about forgiveness in this morning’s text:

Matthew 18:21-35 (NLT)

²¹ Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” ²² “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!”

Let’s stop here for just a moment. Peter was asking a question about personal forgiveness. He wasn’t speaking about the church or the kind of forgiveness that only Jesus and God can give. He was talking about people being personally wronged.

The Jewish teachings of the day said that if someone repeatedly wronged you, you had to forgive them three times, but on the fourth you no longer had to. So when he answered his own question with a seven, he thought he was going above and beyond and being magnanimous. But Jesus told him that when it comes to forgiving his children there was no number of times, forgiveness was supposed to be an ongoing thing. Then he launched into this parable to explain why.

²³ “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. ²⁴ In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. ²⁵ He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. ²⁶ “But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ ²⁷ Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

²⁸ “But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. ²⁹ “His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. ³⁰ But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

³¹ “When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. ³² Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me.

³³ Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

He tells a story of a man who was so far in debt that there was absolutely no way he could or would ever repay it to the king (and O, by the way...God is the King). The King had the right to throw the man into prison and to have him and his whole family sold into slavery to repay this debt...but he didn't. The man begged him for more time. Filled with pity and compassion for the man he not only didn't throw him in prison but forgave his entire debt. He was turned loose a forgiven and free man.

But then he shows he was forgiven but he was not going to pass it on to others. He went out and found another servant who owed him a pittance compared to what he had been forgiven. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded his money. When this man pleaded with him for more time as he had just finished doing with the King, he did not show the man forgiveness and mercy as the King had him. Instead he threw him into prison until he could repay his debt.

Other servants who had witnessed it all were appalled by his behavior. How could he be forgiven so much and then not forgive so little? How could he expect mercy and forgiveness and not offer it to others? This just wasn't right and they reported it all to the King.

The King pulled him back in and went from forgiving him to telling him he was evil. He flat out tells the man, "I forgave you, shouldn't you forgive others?" Then because he hadn't forgiven the other man he had him thrown into prison with orders to torture him until he repaid the debt, which he couldn't, so he would be tortured for the rest of his life.

Then Jesus sums it all up this way...

³⁵ "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

IV – GET FORGIVEN, GIVE FORGIVENESS:

This all boils down to this – You are forgiven, so you must forgive. But there's more to it than just this. Let's do a comparison shall we. I'm sure we have all been offended. Someone has made you mad at some time or the other. Someone has said or done something that has offended you. You have sworn to stay away from that person, to not speak to them ever again. You don't go anyplace you know that they'll be, and you don't send Christmas cards anymore. You have written them off until they come groveling and apologizing. And even then you don't think you can really forgive them.

Now let's put this in perspective of the story about forgiveness that Jesus just gave us. What have you done to offend God? How bad have you been? How often have you done something? How many times a day or a week or a month do you hurt God's feelings or offend him by your thoughts, words, or actions? How does that compare to what someone else has done to you? We tend to act like the first servant don't we?

When you compare how much you have been forgiven it just doesn't add up that you don't forgive others. God has forgiven you a lot more than you will ever have to forgive others. I know it's not easy, but it is expected by God. Jesus told us in his prayer that we will be forgiven based on the way we forgive others. There are no ifs, ands, buts or excuses that can be made to get out of it. As followers of Jesus we are called to forgive others.

And knowing this one of the things that startles me is that one of the worst places I witness this forgiveness is in the Church of Jesus Christ. People leave churches instead of forgiving someone. People won't sit in the same pew, or go to someone's funeral because they feel they have been slighted. I really have trouble understanding this one. We come to church to find Grace. To find God's love and mercy and get the hope of forgiveness and compassion, and eternal life. We want it...but we don't offer it to others as we should.

V – GET IT THEN GIVE IT:

It's very simple. When it comes to grace you get it and then you are supposed to give it. Just as God doesn't expect you to earn it...you shouldn't expect those who need it to earn it from you. God simply calls you to accept it as the gift it is...and then share it with others.

Here's an easy way to remember it:

It's what you must do, god forgives – so must you!

AMEN