

“FORGIVE US AS WE FORGIVE”

Pastor Mike Corwin

LORD’S PRAYER PART 6

TEXT: MATTHEW 18:21 – 35

GOD’S WORD: COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

I – THE FEUD:

It was the 1800’s in the backwoods of Kentucky there were two true mountain men who took pride in their skills with guns and fights. They loved their families and loved their God given freedoms. They got along for the most part and members of one family even married members of the other family, but eventually disagreements broke out which led to what has become America’s best-known feud. History has taken note of it, books have been written about it, movies made and markers erected.

What started the whole thing was that the civil war broke out and Randall “Ole Ran’l” McCoy and his clan in Pike County and William “Devil Anse” Hatfield and his clan in Logan County served on opposite sides, which made the getting along and the marrying each other difficult. Then there was the pig incident. In 1878 Randolph McCoy accused Floyd Hatfield of stealing his pig and took him to court. Randolph didn’t take kindly to the fact that Floyd was found innocent by a judge whose last name also happened to be Hatfield. The star witness was Bill Staton who was the nephew of Randall McCoy and Brother-in-law to Ellison Hatfield. He sided with the Hatfield’s which made the McCoy side of his lineage angry and he ended up being shot by the McCoy’s. The feud was on.

No one passed through the area because you couldn’t do so without getting shot at. Marriages ended or never took place and before the feud ended in 1891, 13 people had lost their lives over a pig! All because no one would say I’m sorry, no one would offer forgiveness. They perpetuated the grudge, the hate, and the feud instead of offering mercy or grace to each other.

II – WE DIDN’T LEARN A THING:

The trouble is we didn’t learn a thing by their mistakes. Feuding is alive and well in our society today. If you think it isn’t, just turn on your televisions during the daytime and watch the programs. Without feuding people Jerry Springer would be out of work. In today’s society the Golden rule has been changed from “DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU” to “DO UNTO OTHERS BEFORE THEY DO UNTO YOU.” You want more proof we are an unforgiving society, look at the millions of lawsuits, which are filed each year. A familiar nursery

rhyme now goes: “HUMPTY DUMPTY SAT ON A WALL-HUMPTY DUMPTY HAD A GREAT FALL-SO HUMPTY DUMPTY GAVE HIS LAWYER A CALL.”

I know that none of you here today suffers from this disease of un-forgiveness. I know that none of you are mad at anyone; none of you are carrying around any hatred or holding a grudge against another child of God. I know that because you are all Christians and you know what the teachings of the Bible say to us about such things (said tongue in cheek). You heard read this morning part of the letter Paul wrote to the church in Colosse where he puts it very plainly in verse 13 that “You must make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Paul states it very plainly. If you’re a Christian you are forgiven and if you are forgiven, you must forgive.

What Paul was saying and what I want you to grasp is this: FORGIVENESS IS AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE. You should be willing to forgive others based solely on the fact you are thankful that God has forgiven you through the sacrifice of his Son Jesus. The bloody rule of an eye for an eye was replaced by the bloody sacrifice of Jesus who brought us forgiveness, which we are called to share with everyone. He died for everyone – not just you.

III – TEXT:

We have trouble with this aspect of our faith but the fact remains it’s a basic principle of Christianity. This teaching is very clear in our Bible lesson this morning. We know it as the “STORY OF THE UNFORGIVING DEBTOR” where Jesus spells out this duty that if we are forgiven, we too must forgive...

Matthew 18:21 – 35 (NLT)

²¹Then 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! 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. ²⁴In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. ²⁵He 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.’ ²⁷Then 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. ³⁰But 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. ³²Then 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. ³³Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. ³⁵"That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

You have to love Peter don't you? He's the disciple who's not afraid to step out on a limb, or the water, and ask questions. The Jewish tradition at the time was that a person could be forgiven 3 times for a repeated sin, but the 4th time there was no forgiveness. So when Peter asks this question he thinks he's being big hearted, until Jesus sets him straight. Jesus gives him an exaggerated large number, which means that the number doesn't matter. There is no limit.

Then he tells a story where a king decided to call all his accounts due and hauled in someone who owed him millions of dollars. Instead of giving the man what he deserved he forgave him the debt and set him free. This man immediately goes out and grabs someone who only owes him a couple thousand and doesn't forgive him, but has him thrown into prison until he repays the debt. The king hears that the man who has been forgiven was not forgiving to others so revoked his forgiveness and throws him to the torturers.

The King in the story is obviously God who calls the account of a man due and gives him grace, gives him forgiveness. This man then goes out and doesn't give the other man grace or forgiveness, but holds his sin against him and metes out punishment. God then revokes his grace from the first man and gives him what he deserves for his own sins.

In other words, this parable is about the need for us to be an agent of God's forgiveness, not just a recipient of God's forgiveness. It lays out plainly that an unforgiving person can hope for no forgiveness for their own sins.

IV – FORGIVE US AS WE FORGIVE:

When we pray The Lord's Prayer we are repeating this principle each and every time. Jesus said to pray, "Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us" as we find in Matthew 6:12. In verses 14-15 Jesus added, "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." There is actually a danger in praying this line when we are angry with someone for what they've done to us because we are actually asking God not to forgive us.

We don't really like this line of the prayer do we? When you come right down to it we consider forgiveness an outrageous concept. It's unnatural to forgive someone who has caused us pain and suffering. We'd much rather cause them pain and suffering to get even wouldn't we? How dare that person do such a thing, I'll show them! We can very easily slip back into the eye for an eye

mentality. That's why we pray this line each time we say the Lord's Prayer, because we must continually ask for forgiveness for the things we do against God, and be reminded that we must forgive others, no matter what they've done to us. There is no such thing as an unforgiving Christian.

When you look at the example Jesus set, it becomes easy to forgive. He left Heaven as a sign of love to an unforgiven people. For three years he taught all who would listen about the Kingdom of Heaven and how to get there. He stepped on the toes of the religious leaders, who didn't forgive him but had him arrested, had him beaten and had his bloody torn body nailed to a tree. If anyone deserved to take revenge it was Jesus and yet as he hung there dying for sins he didn't commit he didn't call on legions of angels to seek revenge, he looked down from the perch of death and said, "FORGIVE THEM FATHER FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO." What has anyone done to you that was worse than what they did to our Savior, and in light of his forgiveness how can you be unforgiving?"

V – TAKE OUT THE TRASH:

There is a story about a little four-year-old girl who was learning the Lord's Prayer and as she got to the line we've talked about this morning she prayed, "And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."

I love this imagery. Our lives are like these trash baskets aren't they. If I start the day with an empty basket, it usually has all kinds of trash in it by the end of the day. Some of it I put in, others put some of it there. At the end of the day I want God to empty my basket, to lighten my load. The secret I must remember is that I have to empty the trash other people have put in my basket before God can empty what I've put in myself.

My question for you today is, "How much trash are you hauling around?" How full is your basket? I know that some or all of us have hurts in our lives caused by others, hold grudges against what others have done to us, or our baskets are so full we've gone all the way to hate. I want to suggest that you choose today to take out the trash. Think of those things, which are eating you up inside, which are standing in the way of your own forgiveness, which make you mad every time you think about them, and get rid of them. We're getting ready to go to prayer and as we do so I invite you to take this time to ask God to empty your trash basket of the hate, grudges, and un-forgiveness for others you are carrying around. Give these matters to God, take out the trash. Forgive those who have sinned against you and feel the total forgiveness of God for the sins you've committed against him.

AMEN