

NOVEMBER 17, 2019

“...As we forgive our debtors”

The connection between receiving forgiveness and giving forgiveness is so intertwined that Jesus’ prayer assumes the concurrence of both. In a society being remade by Jesus, there is no room for withholding forgiveness. Instead, we walk in daily recognition of our own mercy by *continually* offering it to others. Where the disciples (and we) feel the limitation of mercy, our Abba Father does not. Jesus wants his kingdom to let go of the struggle for power – and using unforgiveness to manipulate and control others. To do this, we must be in a constant posture of humility as unworthy recipients of a heavenly grace. And through the eyes of the Savior, we too can see others as “worth” the freedom from relational debt.

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- English poet Alexander Pope once wrote, “To err is human; to forgive is divine.” How does forgiving others demonstrate our pursuit of godliness?
 - How is it *divine* to forgive and show mercy?
 - How does our nature seek to retaliate or hold a grudge?
 - When have you struggled to offer forgiveness? When have you experienced someone else’s unwillingness to forgive you?
 - When we demonstrate extraordinary forgiveness, people usually notice. How might those in your community discover the kingdom of God through the way you practice radical forgiveness?
 - Remember that this is the second part of an interwoven prayer request: we ask for forgiveness WHILE we practice forgiving others. How might God’s answer to this prayer reveal his divine life in us?
 - DIG DEEPER: Read Matthew 18:21-35. Jesus gives a parable as a response to Peter’s question about forgiveness. How is it possible for the one who received mercy to turn right around and withhold it? What do we learn of God’s value of mercy? Is there a limit to his mercy?

(Jesus said, “When you pray... pray then in this way...”)

¹²“...And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

²¹Then Peter came and said to Jesus, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵But 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. ²⁶So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ ²⁷And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ ²⁹So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ ³⁰But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. ³¹So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. ³²Then summoning him, his lord *said* to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. ³⁵My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”