

Stage V. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee

C. Jesus End His Withdrawal With Discipleship Training

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #140

7. Jesus' Teaches on "True Kingdom Greatness," Part V: Limitless Forgiveness

Matt. 18.21-35

21 ^{MT}Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, *"I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven."*

23 *"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Have mercy upon me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master had compassion for him, canceled the debt and let him go.*

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Have mercy upon me, and I will pay it back.'

30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are in red italics*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Capernaum
Timeline	September (Month 33)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage V: Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee
	C. Jesus End His Withdrawal With Discipleship Training
Title	7. "True Kingdom Greatness," Part V... Limitless Forgiveness

COMMENT:

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The fifth characteristic of true kingdom greatness in Jesus' teaching in MT 18 is the ability to extend limitless forgiveness. It has been rightly said: "To err is human; to forgive is Divine." Since we all have a sinful nature, we continue to sin throughout our lives. Therefore there is a need for constant forgiveness in our relationships.

Peter brought up the question of "how many times should I forgive my brother" after hearing Jesus' teaching on practicing restoration. For Peter, being willing to repeat the process of forgiveness and restoration seven times with the same person seemed unbelievably merciful. It would qualify for greatness. Jesus' answer of "seventy times seven" blew Peter away.

How could Jesus possibly expect such unlimited forgiveness to characterize his disciples?

The Lord told a parable to illustrate the logical and moral imperative of giving limitless forgiveness to those who sin against us. In a nutshell, a man owed 10,000 bags (talents) of gold to his Lord and Master. Each bag was worth 20 years of wages. In other words, the man owed about \$10,000,000,000 (10 Trillion dollars). It would take 200,000 years of work to pay his debt back, or 2500 lifetimes of 80 years! When he could not repay this impossible sum of money, he pleaded for mercy and his master cancelled the entire debt. This illustrates the way God has forgiven our sins. His forgiveness is lavish to unimaginable degrees.

This forgiven man had lent 200 days wages to another person. After being forgiven a debt that would take 2500 life-times to repay, he demanded that the man who owed him 200 days wages repay him at once. He could not forgive the debt. It was just too big. This illustrates the logical and moral absurdity of refusing to forgive others repeatedly, when we have been forgiven incomparably more by God.

The question in unlimited forgiveness is not the scale of what has been done to us by another person. A debt requiring 200 days of work to pay off is a very significant thing in itself, to be sure. Many of the sins that are committed against us are likewise weighty in themselves, and some are often repeated. However, when we consider the sheer scale of the forgiveness that God has given us—every sin of our entire life, a debt like 10 Trillion dollars, that we could NEVER repay—then what others have done to us is relatively nothing. It is on the scale of 200,000 years vs. 200 days. (The ratio is roughly 400,000 to 1!)

A person who cannot repeatedly forgive those who sin against them is not looking at the scale of their own forgiveness by God. It is all a matter of perspective. A kingdom perspective is a Christ-centered point of view. How much did it cost Jesus to forgive ALL of your sins? What is the sum total of all your sins that you owed in repayment to God? How big is the sin you need to forgive compared to what God has first forgiven you?

In addition, God has already forgiven the sin that the other person has done to you. He does not hold it against them. How can you?

The parable ends with a sobering warning from Jesus. If we refuse to forgive others, we put ourselves into the bondage of bitterness and endless anger. We destroy our own life with the venom of an unforgiving spirit, and we throw away the key to our self-imposed dungeon. The consequence of not forgiving others is that we destroy ourselves, not them.

To summarize MT 18, true greatness in the kingdom of God is defined by Christ-likeness; therefore it is characterized by humble, loving service. This servant-attitude sets a good example before others by constantly acknowledging, and dealing with our own sinfulness. It extends God's care-giving to others, even to the extent of forgiving those who sin against us without limit, and assisting them to be restored and set free from their sin. True greatness is loving others in every relationship of life by putting them first, and humbling ourselves.

This teaching on true greatness ended Jesus season of withdrawal. He will next depart for Judea and Perea, where he will minister for the final eight months of his life. He would demonstrate servant-greatness by dying to provide limitless forgiveness to everyone who believes in him, for he died to forgive the sins of the entire world. Jesus always practiced what he preached.

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APPLICATION:

Who do you need to forgive, as God has first forgiven you?

When and how will you do it?