



“Forgiveness of the King”

Matthew 18:15-35

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Sermon audio and text available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

- Debt...

“... I cancelled all that debt of yours...” (18:32)

III – Terrance Watanabe was a very rich man. Until 2007. When he spent a **year** in Las Vegas... gambling. In that one year gambling binge, Terrance lost nearly \$127 million. Can you imagine losing that much money? Can you imagine having a **debt** of \$127 million? Can you imagine **owing** someone that much?

The story Jesus tells in Matthew 18 is of a man with a debt of 10,000 talents. How much is that? (1 denarius is a days wages. 1 talent is 6000 denarius. So 10,000 talents is 60 million days wages) In average Sydney terms today, that’s about **200,000 years wages**. Which is about \$13,240,000,000... It’s a lot!

He borrowed this money from the King. And now the King wants it back. But he can’t pay it back. He owes a debt that is so big, there is no way he could EVER pay it back. So he begs the King: “Be patient and I’ll pay it back!” And then the King says: “Don’t worry about it. I’ll cancel your debt.”

Can you imagine that happening? Having a debt so big you can’t repay it, and someone cancelling that debt?

Then the man walks outside, with his \$13 billion debt cancelled, and he sees a man who owes HIM money – about \$18,000. And what does he do? This man who has just had his \$13billion debt cancelled, grabs this other man who owes him \$18,000, by the neck, and begins to choke him! And the man begs him: “Please be patient with me and I will pay you back”. But he won’t be patient. He throws him into jail until he’s paid the debt.

This man had an unpayable debt cancelled, and now he throws another man in jail for this tiny debt of 100 denarii.

- So what happens next?

The King finds out and says: “How could you!” “You wicked servant!” “I cancelled your debt of 10,000 talents and you can’t have mercy on a man who owes you only 100 denarii?”

So the King throws HIM in jail. This man's unpayable debt had been cancelled but he couldn't cancel a tiny debt someone had against **him**.

What Jesus is saying is this:

- **Because we have a God of grace... we are a community of grace**
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Because God has cancelled our huge debt against him, we should be people who are able to cancel people's small debts against us. What debt is Jesus talking about? The debt of sin. God has forgiven us our debts, our sins. All of them. Through Jesus' death on the cross, God has paid the cost of our debt of sin against him. And what he says to us is that WE are to be people who are also able to cancel the debts, the sins, others have against us. So when Peter asks Jesus the question, in verse 21:

- *"...Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" (18:21)*

Jesus responds *"Not seven times, but seventy seven times"*

What does that mean?

It means that God wants **us** to show grace and forgiveness to others in the way that he has shown **us** grace. Because we have a God of grace, we are a community of grace. Because he has forgiven us, we are called to forgive others.

How does that look?

This parable is aimed at the Christian community. It's talking about the way we treat each other. This community here should reflect God's character. This community should be a place where, when we sin against each other, when we hurt each other, we look for forgiveness. We cancel debts. We treat others the way God has treated us.

Of course, we're not as good at this as God is at this! We're human. We hold grudges. We're selfish. PLUS, we can find it hard to forgive. And for some of us, for some situations, it's not easy to turn around and forgive someone who asks us for forgiveness. And certainly not 7 times. Or 77 times! Can you imagine someone sinning against you 77 times? Would you be prepared to forgive them again and again and again...? And perhaps it depends on the sin sometimes. Some sins we can easily forgive and let go of. Other sins personally hurt us and affect us deeply and can be a lot harder to forgive. But look at verse 35:

"unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart".

This is about our heart. It doesn't say: "Unless you forgive your brother within 3 hours". What's important is not how **long** it takes. What's important is that we have a heart that is

willing to forgive. And sometimes, that takes time. But the question is: are you **willing**? Do you have a heart that **desires** forgiveness? And of course, we can't forgive someone who doesn't want to be forgiven. But we are called to do what God does – to hold out that offer of forgiveness for others. Just like God, who offers forgiveness to anyone who asks. Do you have a heart that is **willing** to forgive? A heart that holds out an offer of forgiveness?

So why is this important? Why do we want to show grace? Why do we want to forgive? Why does God show us grace and cancel our debt?

- Because we have a God of healing and restoration... we are a community of healing and restoration
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God shows us grace because he wants to see healing and restoration in our lives. And he wants us to be a **community** who desire healing and restoration.

III – Imagine in your home there is a huge crack right through the ceiling, and it's going to fall down. What do you do? Let me suggest 4 options:

1. You can leave the building and move to another building
2. You can ignore the problem. Not care about it. And pretend it will go away.
3. You can try to work out who's to blame. Past generations. Previous owners. The builders.
4. **Or** you can sort out the problem.

You can run away, ignore it, blame someone. Or you can sort it out. When the cracks of sin appear in our lives, when we sin against each other, we can run away, ignore it, spend our time blaming people, OR we can do what Matthew 18 says: **Point it out. Sort it out. Stick it out.**

Because we are a community of healing and restoration, when sin happens, and it does all the time, we don't run away from the problems. And we don't ignore it. And we don't spend all our time arguing about who's to blame. We point it out. We sort it out and we stick it out. Together. Why? Because we want to see **healing** and **restoration**. Even if the person who sins is completely refusing to stop sinning or repent or ask for forgiveness, if they won't listen to you, or others or the church – we treat them like a pagan or tax collector – verse 17. What does that mean? It means we STILL have a desire want to see them restored to the community! We STILL love them and desire to see repentance and forgiveness.

This is all about loving everyone from the heart. Loving each and every person so much that our deepest desire is to see healing and restoration, no matter what they've done. And why is this so important? Look at verses 18 - 19:

- *"... whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven..." (18:18)*

What does that mean?

It means that our community here on earth is part of the community of heaven. It means that relationships in this church reflect eternal heavenly relationships. Because Jesus has made a **bridge** between heaven and earth. It is at the cross of Jesus, where our debt was paid and where we were reconciled with God – it is at this cross that heaven and earth meet. We lose someone from God's community on earth, we lose them from heaven. This is not just earthly stuff we're talking about here. There are heavenly consequences. If we don't deal with sin in our earthly community, it affects people's salvation.

So how does it look?

How does it look to have healing and restoration?

- *"For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them." (18:20)*

This verse is so often taken out of context. It is here in the context of healing and restoration. When two or three people gather to sort out a problem between them, to deal with the sin in the community, Jesus says: "I am there with you". When we gather to sort things out, Jesus is with us and he is able to give healing and restoration, verse 19: "it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."

- What does that mean? It means that **if we are willing, God is able.**

Point it out. Sort it out. Stick it out.

You may be dealing with short or long term issues of sin, or forgiveness. And if you are, I want to say to you that what you're facing is important to God. Whether you've been hurt or you've hurt someone else, God's greatest desire is to see healing and restoration. No matter how hard it is, or how long it takes, that's what this community is about. We have a God of healing and restoration so we are a **community** of healing and restoration.

And I simply want to encourage you, whatever your situation is, to stick with it. And remember, when we gather together with these issues, Jesus is with us. He is able to bring healing and restoration. No matter how impossible that may seem. Let's pray.