

Sermon on the Mount - Part 14

by David Servant

The sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness in our relationships with others and teaches us that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us and we will not gain heaven.

Duration: 28:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:12-13, Matthew 18:15-17, Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 17:3-4

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Reconciliation"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of forgiveness as highlighted in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the need for reconciliation through confession and repentance. It explores the concept that forgiveness is tied to reconciliation and should be extended to those who humble themselves and seek forgiveness. The speaker discusses the biblical perspective on forgiveness, addressing the necessity of confronting sin and seeking reconciliation within the body of Christ. The sermon also touches on the Lord's Prayer, focusing on the desire for holiness and deliverance from evil in alignment with God's kingdom and glory.

Transcript

Welcome, once again, to Galilee, Israel. Thanks so much for joining me today as we continue our study through the Sermon on the Mount. We're not very far, as I often tell you at the beginning of this program, from the original place where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount.

Could have been any one of these mountains right around here. No one actually knows for sure, but there's no doubt that Jesus would have walked numerous times right in this valley behind me, what is called today the Valley of the Doves. But it comes right up here from the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus, of course, based much of his ministry in Capernaum. To travel from there to Cana of Galilee, for example, you come right up this valley behind me. That was the old road, and also on to Nazareth and so forth.

We're, in one sense, standing on holy ground, if you can look at it that way. It's nice to be here, but it's even nicer to be here and have a copy of the Sermon on the Mount, with which we can look at together. Not just look at it, but then look at our lives, because that's what this sermon is all about.

It's about conforming to the will of God. If there's one theme that surfaces again and again from the Sermon on the Mount, it's that one right there, holiness unto God. We have seen over and over again that there's no debating this.

There's a correlation between holiness and gaining heaven. You can't escape that. That bothers a lot of evangelicals, because they've been taught that we're saved by grace through faith, which is certainly true and right from scripture.

But the faith that saves is a faith that is a living faith, James told us, a faith that is characterized by obedience, and so that's the connection. Jesus talks over and over again about what you need to do to stay out of hell, what you need to do to go to heaven, and he never once in this entire sermon mentions faith or believing. Isn't that a shock? But yet in one sense he does, because those who believe, they'll do what he said, because they believe in the Lord Jesus.

He's their king, he's their master, and they believe that he's the judge of the living and the dead, that he's coming again, that he will rule over all one day. So naturally, if you believe that, well, you're going to line your life up to be pleasing to him as you possibly can. Currently we're in the sixth chapter.

We're looking at what is referred to as the Lord's Prayer. That's not a name that Jesus gave it, and if I was going to give it a name, I'd call it the Prayer of the True Disciple. If you've missed our former broadcast, we talked about that in more detail.

At the end of the broadcast, we'll give you some information on how you can get the DVDs, and that way you could get all of this entire series and not miss anything. But let's start today where we stopped last time in Matthew chapter six and verse 12. Jesus said, and this is what we should be praying, forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And if we skip over verse number 13, after the prayer he gives a commentary on that clause of the prayer, and he says, for if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly father will also forgive you. Now listen closely. But if you do not forgive men, then your father will not forgive your transgressions.

Well that's serious, and I told you that one of the common themes, if not the most common theme of this, if not the major theme of this entire sermon is how you can be certain you're going to heaven. Here is one of those many warnings that we find, and it's a warning based on our conduct. If we don't forgive, God will not forgive us.

Now let me ask you a question. If God does not forgive you, are your sins forgiven? Well clearly the answer is no. If your sins are not forgiven, do you go to heaven? Well, I think the answer is obvious there.

People who don't have their sins forgiven don't go to heaven. And so in order to go to heaven, we have to be forgiving people. Now that shouldn't surprise us.

We've already talked about this somewhat. Later on in the same gospel, Matthew tells us Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant. You know the story.

In the end, the unforgiving servant, the Bible says that his master was moved with anger. He reinstated his formerly forgiven debt and said, forget that now. You're no longer forgiven.

I'm reinstating what you owed me. Now you owe it to me once again. I'm going to cast you into prison.

You'll be tortured there until you repay every cent, which you can never repay because it's such a mountain of debt. And Jesus then, he didn't stop there. He said, so shall my heavenly father do to you if each of you does not forgive your brother from your heart.

So you can see how serious this is. Again, let's not just skim over the surface of these important scriptures. Jesus promised us if we don't forgive, God will not forgive us.

So we have to make sure we forgive. Now, this is not the only time that Jesus talked about the subject of forgiveness. And I've already made mention to you of Matthew chapter 18.

I think that the subject of forgiveness has been one that has been studied just the surface of it and no one, very few have gone deeper to see what scripture says. And those of us who have tried to forgive and found how difficult it is to forgive people who have wronged us, have had a lot of questions about exactly what God is expecting of us. And if you've lived for very long, chances are you've had some people that have been difficult to forgive in your life.

All right. First of all, why should we be forgiving? Because we've been forgiven so much from God. But let me ask you a question.

Did God just automatically forgive us? No. He forgave us when we confessed, when we repented, when we humbled ourselves. Now, I'm going to ask a question just to provoke your thinking.

Does God expect us to do what he never does? What do I mean? Does God expect us to forgive those who never humble themselves and ask for our forgiveness? Well, I'm going to suggest to you that no, he does not. But before I explain that further, I want to say this. I'm not in any way implying or stating that God does not expect us to love our enemies.

We already read about that. To be merciful. We've already read about that in the Sermon on the Mount.

And to long for reconciliation and do everything we can to reconcile with people. That is, we should love everyone. So I'm not giving anyone an excuse to be holding a grudge and holding hatred in their heart.

But I'm talking about the technical act of forgiveness, which when God forgives us, doesn't it always result in reconciliation? That is, when we repent and confess our sin, he forgives us and then our relationship is restored. When God thinks about us or when he sees us the next time, God is not saying, oh, I remember what you did and I'm a little bit standoffish from you. I'm not sure I want to talk to you.

No, no. We're reconciled. And you know, this is also true in human relationships.

If there's strife between you and someone else, let's take a brother or sister in Christ, and that person comes and asks for your forgiveness and you grant them forgiveness, there's a reconciliation that takes place. You know, the relationship is restored. Whereas I found that if I try to forgive someone who doesn't ask for my forgiveness, who doesn't humble himself, him or herself, who doesn't, you know, acknowledge what they've done to sin against me, then when I see them, you know, I struggle with unforgiveness.

And you know, it's never the same. When I see them, I don't think to myself, oh, you know, nothing's wrong, good to have you as my friend. You know, we're reconciled.

No, we're not reconciled. It doesn't result in reconciliation. And I believe that forgiveness, in the strictest sense of what forgiveness is, results in reconciliation.

Now again, I'm not saying, you know, what I'm saying is love and forgiveness are, you know, can be looked at as two separate things. God loves people whom he does not forgive. So it must be possible to love people but not forgive people.

You follow? Because that's what God does all the time. He loves the whole world. He hasn't forgiven the whole world yet.

Okay? Now let me ask you another question to provoke your thinking in this regard. Think of two cases where somebody has sinned against you, two people have sinned against you. Who's the easiest person to forgive? The person who asks for forgiveness or the person who doesn't ask for forgiveness? Well, I bet you'd agree with me that it's quite easy to forgive someone who humbles himself or herself, and it's quite difficult to forgive someone who doesn't, all right? Second question.

Who is it that we find that it's just really, we cannot not forgive them? In other words, I'm trying to emphasize how easy it is to forgive a certain category of people. Who is that? It's the people who ask for forgiveness. I mean, it's hard to hold a grudge against a person who humbles himself, and you can see that if we take forgiveness in two different angles, forgiving someone who asks for forgiveness and forgiving someone who doesn't ask for forgiveness.

One's easy, one's hard. Look at it from another standpoint. Let's say two people sinned against you, you don't forgive either one of them.

This one asks for forgiveness, this one does not ask for forgiveness. And you refuse to forgive each one. Who are you sinning against to the greatest degree? Let's just assume they're both sins, that you have unforgiveness against this person and against this person.

This person has not asked for forgiveness, this person has asked for forgiveness. You refuse to forgive them both, all right? So you're in unforgiveness towards them both. Which is the greater sin? Your refusal to forgive this person who has not asked, or your refusal to forgive this person who has asked? I think we'd all agree, certainly it's a greater sin, assuming they're both sins now, to not forgive this person who has asked for forgiveness.

Okay? I'm just trying to provoke your thinking. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, notice that the master, the king, expected the servant whom he forgave to forgive his fellow servant, but in both cases, both people asked for forgiveness. In fact, the king said, you asked me for forgiveness and I granted it to you.

See, he humbled himself and so he was forgiven. And then his fellow servant asked him for forgiveness and he wouldn't forgive him. In both cases, asked for forgiveness.

Jesus said, if your brother sins against you, this is Luke 17, verse 7, if your brother sins against you, rebuke him. If he repents, forgive him. If he comes to you seven times in one day and says, I repent, forgive him.

That is, give him the benefit of the doubt. All right? So all these verses are leading me to wonder if forgiveness, true forgiveness, in the most technical sense, can only be actually granted, and this is what God expects of us, when someone humbles himself and asks for forgiveness. And we'll talk about that in the very next segment in more detail.

And I'll give you some even more things to provoke your thinking along these lines. Okay? All right? See you back here in one minute. God bless you.

Welcome to the ancient Roman city of Philippi, here in Greece. And where I'm walking right now, among the ruins, was a magnificent Roman forum. Surrounded on three sides by these colonnades, you can see some of the pillars.

They would have been all along on all three sides. And this was the city where the apostle Paul cast out a spirit of divination from a little slave girl. And as a result, this city was thrown into an uproar.

The magistrates threw them into prison. But Paul and Silas were singing praises to God at midnight, and the Lord sent an earthquake and delivered them. And as a result, the Philippian jailer and all of his household were saved and baptized that night, and the church of Jesus Christ was born here in Philippi in about 49 AD.

You can read all about that in Acts chapter 16. Okay. Welcome back.

We're going to continue considering what Jesus had to say about the necessity of forgiving those who sin against us. Now, I proposed in the first segment of our program that perhaps God does not expect us to forgive everyone, but only those who confess their sin to us. And I have proposed that based upon a number of points that I brought up in the first segment.

Now, I want to bring up another one. And this one could be the most persuasive of all in my own mind. It is found in Matthew chapter 18, and it is the steps of reconciliation between brothers and sisters.

When I use the word brothers, I mean everybody in the body of Christ. Jesus said, if your brother sins against you, go to him privately and confront him. And he said, if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

Now, notice Jesus didn't say, listen closely, he did not say, if your brother sins against you, forgive him. Why do you suppose he said that? I think he said that because he knows how can you forgive someone who doesn't ask you to forgive them? Because otherwise there could be no reconciliation, right? You know that from experience. You try to forgive someone who's wronged you without confronting them, and there's always this wall between you.

When you see them, it's there. There's no reconciliation. Whereas if they repented and asked your forgiveness, well then you'd say, I forgive you, we're reconciled.

Let's go on, forget about it. Don't ever bring it up again. I don't want everyone to hear about that again.

I love you. Glad to have you back. See? Forgiveness results in reconciliation.

So Christ wants us to reconcile, and he realizes you can't do it just by forgiving. No, you do it by confrontation, which results in confession, which then obligates you to forgive, which the result then is reconciliation. That's what God wants.

Now, he said if your brother doesn't listen to you, now if he does listen to you, that means he humbles himself and says, I'm sorry, forgive me, and you say, I forgive you, and you're reconciled. Praise God, that's the goal. If he doesn't listen to you, Jesus said, go get one or two with you and confront him again.

That is, you're trying to bring a little more persuasive power. You're bringing some other people into the equation who can listen to both sides of the story. Someone said that's why God gave us two ears, so we can hear the two sides, because there's always two sides to every story.

And they'll listen to your side, listen to that person's side, and they'll make a judgment. Let's just say they judge in your favor, and they say, yes, you have sinned, confess, ask forgiveness, and he'll forgive you, but what you've done is wrong, you've sinned. So, humble yourself.

And if he refuses, then, to humble himself and ask forgiveness, what did Jesus say? Did he say, well then, just forgive him, because if you don't forgive him, God won't forgive you? No, he did not say that. No, no, he said, then take him in front of the whole church and confront him one more time. Now, may I just add as a little caveat here, Jesus was not thinking of a megachurch, where you bring him up in front of 5,000 people and talk about it in front of everybody.

No, the churches that Jesus Christ envisioned and the churches of the New Testament were small groups that met in homes. No church was larger than what would meet in a single home. And so, a church is a group of people who all know each other rather closely, and they're meeting together on a regular basis.

They're true, close friends. There's no strangers for very long in a true New Testament church, because it's no bigger than what can fit in a house. So, when Christ said, bring him in front of the whole church, you've got to read that contextually.

And so, if you're going to practice this in a megachurch, what it would mean is, bring him in front of his small group. That is, if he even attends a small group. And so, we've got so many problems, because we're not really following the gospel and the basic pattern of the church.

So, a lot of things get messed up. But in any case, Jesus didn't say, if he doesn't receive you, then, okay, just forgive him, because what I said in the Sermon on the Mount, if you don't forgive, you won't be forgiven. No, he says, put him out from your midst and treat him like a tax collector or a Gentile.

That is, you have no fellowship with this kind of person. This is a kind of person who needs to be evangelized, if anything. But if he's already resisted the collective persuasion of the entire church, a group of people who knows both parties, who loves both parties, and who has rendered judgment that you need to repent, and he refuses to repent, he reveals that he himself is probably not a true follower of Christ, and has got a stubborn heart and a stiff neck, and he's proud and so forth, and he won't humble himself.

And so, he's excommunicated. Now, can you imagine someone describing a situation like that and saying, well, we forgave him, and then we excommunicated him? Now, those two things are mutually exclusive. You don't forgive people and, at the same time, excommunicate them, because forgiveness implies reconciliation, you see.

And so, I'm showing you, here's a case where Jesus does not expect us to forgive someone who at least appears to be a brother at first. No obligation to forgive him unless he repents and humbles himself. And I'm posing to you the possibility, and I'm obviously, now you know, persuaded of this possibility, that God does not expect us to do what he himself never does.

He doesn't forgive people who don't ask for forgiveness. Now, of course, people say, well, what about the soldiers that were dividing Christ's garments? Jesus prayed that God would forgive them. So, obviously, Jesus was concerned that God would not forgive them, right? Because they obviously weren't humbling

themselves, asking his forgiveness, so they weren't in a position to receive God's forgiveness, but Jesus is asking God the Father to forgive them, but he has a reason, a basis for it.

They don't know what they're doing. This is their job. These guys crucify criminals all the time.

They don't know who I am, and so, Father, please, let this one slide by. Does that mean those guys all went to heaven and God forgave all their sins for all time? No. God had mercy on them in that one time for dividing the garments of the Son of God and being so uncaring, and that's it.

So don't make that the rule when that is clearly the huge exception to the rule of all the other scriptures that we're looking at here. Okay? And, you know, Stephen, when he was being martyred, he prayed, God, don't hold this sin against them. Well, that was a prayer for mercy for one sin, an extraordinary prayer indeed.

And, again, there's no even proof in scripture that God did answer his prayer and not hold that sin against them. God might have said, no, that's a paranoid answer there. Sorry.

When you kill one of my people, I remember that, and I'm going to repay that because I avenge the blood of my saints. That's an interesting thought. You know, there's a scene in the Revelation where some of the saints who were martyred for their faith, they cry out, how long, oh Lord, will you wait, will you delay until you avenge our blood? And what does Jesus say to them in Revelation? He says, hey, get over your unforgiveness or I'll have to kick you out of heaven.

Man, you need to forgive those guys who cut off your heads. No, he says, be patient, be patient. There's more martyrs to be made than we're going to do justice.

How about Joseph? Here's a guy who is a great example of forgiveness and mercy, but did he immediately forgive his brothers? No, no, no, no, because that's not what's best for them. He made them go through hell, didn't he, before he brought them to a place of repentance and remorse and confession and humility and acknowledgement. And then, and only then, did he reveal himself to them and forgive them.

But up until then, oh no, man, he didn't forgive them because they weren't humble, they didn't ask for forgiveness. And he tested them to see how they would treat the favored younger brother. He knew how he had been treated, the favored brother.

Now let's see how they treat the new favored brother. And they were willing to give up their lives in exchange for their favored little brother. You see that? Okay, so put all these scriptures together.

Don't just skim over the surface and quote one verse of the Bible that says we should forgive. Jesus said we should forgive. We don't forgive.

God won't forgive us. No, Jesus is saying you need to forgive as God forgives. And of course you can see the great, horrible, horrible, horrible sin if someone asks for our forgiveness and we refuse to forgive them, how that would anger God and disqualify us for heaven.

You can see that so plainly. It makes perfect sense. But refusing to forgive somebody who doesn't repent, well, that's why Jesus said go and confront him.

You see, again, he didn't say forgive him. He said go confront him. I quoted you in the first segment of this program.

Luke 17, 7. Go read it for yourself. If your brother sins, rebuke him. Didn't say forgive him.

If he repents, there's the conditional clause. If he repents, forgive him. And then Christ goes on to say if he comes to you seven times in one day and says I repent, which it would be hard to believe he's sincere, wouldn't it? If he sinned against you seven times in one day and came back seven times and said I repent, you'd think, you know what, I don't even think you're sincere.

But Christ says give the guy the benefit of the doubt. Because he's coming back to you and humbling himself, that shows that something's going on in his heart. So you have an obligation then to forgive him.

But otherwise, you are to rebuke him and admonish him and so forth. That's how true reconciliation takes place. That's the only way reconciliation takes place.

And what I've shared with you is entirely, entirely biblical. And there could be other examples that could be cited. Now, we've just got a minute.

I want to take a look at the last part of the Lord's Prayer. And that was Matthew 6 and verse number 13. Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Well, is God leading us into temptation? Well, obviously, there's the possibility that he might lead us into a place where we could be tempted. And that the true disciple of Christ, of which this is the prayer of the true disciple of Christ, wants so desperately not to sin that he knows that one way that can help him not to sin is if he is nowhere near temptation. Isn't that true? Probably, you know, when you're in church, we sin less than anywhere else because there's such little temptation there in church.

So eliminate the temptation, and you eliminate the chance of sin. You can't take yourself out of this world, but we can certainly avoid the temptations, many of the temptations this world has to offer. And so we're saying, God, lead me so I'm not near temptation, but I want to be delivered from evil.

So again, this is a prayer that shows our greatest desire from the beginning to the end is I want to be holy before God. I want to please my God, and I don't want to do evil. Why? Because thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

You see, God's great, God's big, God's the great judge. He'll have a kingdom forever. I want to be ready for it.

And so that's why I'm making all these requests. This prayer revolves around my desire to be holy and pleasing your sight, your kingdom, your glory, your power forever and ever. Okay, hey, thanks so much for joining me on our program today.

Until next time, keep following Jesus with all your heart. God bless you. Hey, there's a whole lot more happening through the ministry of Heaven's Family than just this teaching broadcast.

Heaven's Family consists of three divisions, the first of which is Shepherd Serve. And through the ministry of Shepherd Serve, we are literally equipping thousands of hungry pastors around the world with vital biblical truth every single year. We do that in two ways.

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You can read about it at all three of our websites. Thanks so much. God bless you.

I Was Hungry

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