

Empire Church of the Brethren
Sunday Service Sermons

11 February 2024

The Habit of Forgiving

Text: "For if you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will not forgive your sins." *Matt. 6:14-15*

On all occasions Jesus maintained the habit of being forgiving toward those who mistreated him. This was supremely demonstrated by his words from the cross in which he offered forgiveness and prayed for the forgiveness of those who were crucifying him.

This prayer for forgiveness was not the impulse of the moment; it was the expression of a permanent principle by which Jesus lived.

If you and I would be true followers of Jesus, we must adopt his fundamental attitudes and then engage in the same kinds of activities in which he participated.

Jesus taught that we should seek forgiveness and also grant forgiveness.

It is significant that in the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught his disciples to be forgiving in the same breath in which he taught them to pray for forgiveness.

Our Lord taught that if we would experience forgiveness, we must be forgiving.

Forgiving others is not a price we pay in order to receive forgiveness; it is a condition we must meet in order to obtain forgiveness.

There is a difference between paying a price and meeting a condition.

Jesus taught that we must be forgiving.

In Jesus' day it was common practice to grant forgiveness three times.

When Peter inquired about forgiving seven times, he was being very generous.

Jesus shocked his disciples by telling them that they must not place restrictions on forgiveness: "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven."

Behind our Lord's command to practice unlimited forgiveness is his divine desire to deliver us from self-destructive attitudes and actions.

He recognized that to harbor hate in the heart is to create an acid that will destroy our capacity to be loving and helpful.

Our Lord recognized that all of us will experience mistreatment and injustice in one form or another.

In his own experience, he developed the habit of always practicing forgiveness rather than responding with hate, bitterness, and hostility.

He never resorted to retaliation.

Retaliation of evil for evil will destroy our homes, our families, and our fellowship.

The apostle Paul says that Satan seeks to prevent us from practicing forgiveness so that he might gain an advantage over us.

The most expensive luxury anyone can have is a grudge against a Christian brother or sister.

A forgiving spirit prevents the Devil from establishing a beachhead in our minds and thought processes.

When we practice forgiveness we will hear our Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a little, I will put you in charge of many things.

Come and share your master's happiness." *Matt. 25:23*

Jesus used stories to tell of the most important aspects of a life lived for God.

Here he is saying that our lives will be judged on the basis of our fidelity. We will be rewarded on the basis of our goodness and faithfulness to God's commands and precepts.

Here Jesus is challenging us to do our best and become a better person.

We are children of God by grace through faith.

We also are servants of God with the privilege of helping God and others.

We must not waste our opportunities to minister to others.

The abilities that God has given to each of us are abilities for carrying on his kingdom work in the world today.

These abilities are distributed by the Holy spirit and enabled by him as well.

These abilities are the gospel itself, the truths Christ preached, the training we have received, the energy available to us, the education and skills we have acquired, along with Christian experience, health, wealth, time, opportunities, and effectiveness in preaching and teaching.

God has entrusted to us all of the gifts and endowments of the Holy Spirit.

The abilities are given according to each person's ability.

People are unequal in their natural abilities.

Each one being unique and special.

Our opportunities are equal to our abilities.

Each Christian has an equal opportunity and charge to become a good and faithful servant of God.

Whatever abilities you have, commit them to God to be used to further his kingdom.

Satan will tell you that your abilities do not matter.

They are not significant or useful to the Kingdom of God.

Use what God has given you to Glorify Him and further his kingdom on earth.

Do not think that your talent is so small that it does not matter and neglect to respond to the opportunities presented to you to use your abilities.

The good news is that each of us has been given talents and abilities by God so we can be a vital part of what He is doing.

The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to each believer according to the needs of the church.

No one is left empty-handed.

We all have gifts to contribute to the benefit of the whole.

We can double our capital (abilities) by faithfulness.

We can have twice as much of the same things as were first entrusted to us if we are reliable and trustworthy in using what God has placed in our hands.

One note is a sound, many notes are music.

We, together, make beautiful music for the Lord.

God accepts us when we claim Jesus as Lord.

He approves of us when we use what we have to his benefit.

When we are obedient and faithfully using our abilities for him and his kingdom then he says well done.

This parable teaches that we can enter into the joy of our lord in the here and now.

Ours can be the joy of doing good.

Ours can be the joy of showing God's love to others.

Ours can be the joy of seeing people come to know Jesus Christ as Savior.

Ours can be the joy of becoming what God wants us to be.

Let us beware of thinking of ourselves as one-talent people.

We need to recognize that the little person with a great gospel is mightier than a great person with no gospel.

If we neglect to use our opportunities and gifts, we will lose them.

If we bury our gifts, we reveal that we do not have the character that makes it possible for us to be compatible or comfortable with God.

Let us use what God has given to us that we might bring glory to him and that he might be glorified in us.

Two of our greatest gifts are forgiveness and generosity.

Let us use them wisely to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth.
This is the good news of what God has done in and through Jesus "The Christ", The Son of the
Living God.
Who Loves!