KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 18:21-35

Week of Sunday 5th May 2024

Theme of Sermon

Leader Preparation

The topic this week is a very challenging one – the topic of forgiveness. The story is not vague about the importance of us forgiving others. It makes it clear that disobedience to God in this matter can exclude us from receiving forgiveness ourselves. I have not yet heard this week's sermon, but can strongly recommend the sermon preached previously at RUC by Dr Nat Schluter on this topic: https://sermons.ruc.org.za/sermons/forgiveness-without-borders/

Last week, our focus was on the importance of addressing sin in our community and not becoming complacent about it. Our attitude to the sins of others should not be cruel, but should be guided by the recognition that we have been rescued from the same situation ourselves.

Please review the leader notes, pages 9 and 10

Group Time:



Ask your group members to share about a hobby, sport or skill that they enjoy.

- What made them start along that path?
- What have they had to learn to enable them to reach the skill level they have achieved, compared to where they started?
- Who is someone at the top of the field they are in – how would their ability compare to them?



Discuss with the group how our perspective of ourselves often depends on who we are comparing ourselves to. If we compare ourselves to complete beginners, we can feel like experts. If we compare ourselves to those at the peak level, we can feel absolutely inferior.

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 18:21-35

Reading the story

Read through the passage and then discuss how the following things compare:

- The authority level of the king vs the authority of the servant.
- The debt owed by the servant vs the debt owed by the fellow servant (in terms of the actual amount; in terms of being able to pay it back at some stage)
- The response of the servant vs the response of his fellow servant to their debt.
- The choices of the king vs the servant in claiming what they were owed.

How many times?

Think of a time when you needed to choose to forgive someone. What was most difficult about following through? Are you ever tempted to revisit how you have been wronged?

How many times has God needed to forgive you? Are there any things you think he cannot forgive you for? Do you know that you have received his love and forgiveness?

When you think about what Jesus has done for you, how does that allow your heart to soften to those who have sinned against you?

When you are faced with someone who has sinned against you, do you tend to focus more on how much you have been forgiven by God, or on how much they have hurt you? How could focusing on what God has done for you help you to respond with love to your brother or sister?

The consequences

Matthew 6:14-15

Matthew 7:1-2

James 2:12-13

How does our response to others affect our standing before God?

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

1 John 4:11

What should govern the way we respond to those who sin against us? Who is our example of how to respond?

Prayer

You may like to pray these prayers as a group:

Jesus our Saviour, we thank you that you endured a criminal's death for us.

When we are carried away with pride, remind us that you were betrayed, whipped, and publicly humiliated.

When we are fully of resentment, may we remember that you prayed "Father, forgive.'

Show us your way of overcoming hatred with love, and keep our eyes fixed on you, now and always.

Amen

Angela Ashwin

Pray the version of the Lord's Prayer that you prefer. Perhaps have a pause to truly consider the highlighted lines:

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come

Your will be done

On earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Save us from the time of trial

And deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.

Now and forever,

Amen