

SHARING FORGIVENESS

(Matthew 18:21-35)

FORGIVENESS IS A GIFT TO BE SHARED

“Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you” (Eph 4:32)

- **IT CAN BE HARD TO SHARE IT**

The one who throws the stone forgets; the one who is hit remembers forever. (Angolan proverb)

This business of forgiving is by no means a simple thing.... We say, “Very well, if the other fellow is sorry and begs my pardon, I will forgive him, then I’ll give in.” We make of forgiveness a law of reciprocity. And this never works. For then both of us say to ourselves, “The other fellow has to make the first move.” And then I watch like a hawk to see whether the other person will flash a signal to me with his eyes or whether I can detect some small hint between the lines of his letter which shows that he is sorry. I am always on the point of forgiving...but I never forgive. (Helmut Thieleck, *Waiting*)

Teaching and illustration: Matt 18:21-35

- Forgiveness was recent
- Forgiveness was huge
- Forgiveness was complete

- **BUT SHARING THE GIFT LEADS TO LIFE (23-27)**

The first and often the only person to be healed by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiveness.... When we genuinely forgive, we set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner we set free was us. (Lewis Smedes, *Shame*)

The only hope for the future lay in an all-embracing attitude of forgiveness of the peoples who had been our enemies. Forgiveness, my prison experience had taught me, was not mere religious sentimentality; it was as fundamental a law of the human spirit as the law of gravity. If one broke the law of gravity, one broke one’s neck; if one broke the law of forgiveness, one inflicted a mortal wound on one’s spirit. (Laurens van der Post, *The Prisoner and the Bomb*)

- **WITHHOLDING THE GIFT LEADS TO DEATH (31-35)**

The bitter heart eats its owner. (Bantu proverb)

Anger is exhausting. (Ted Ewing, *Today’s Sermon*)

To Consider...

- What kind of issues do you typically find it hard to let go of?
- How could you take steps to begin to let go of one of those this week?

HEART OF THE MATTER

(Don Henley)

I got the call today I didn't want to hear
 But I knew that it would come
 An old, true friend of ours was talking on the phone
 She said you found someone
 And I thought of all the bad luck and the struggles we went through
 And how I lost me and you lost you
 What are these voices outside love's open door?
 Make us throw off our contentment and beg for something more

I'm learning to live without you now
 But I miss you sometimes
 The more I know, the less I understand
 All the things I thought I knew, I'm learning again
 I've been trying to get down to the heart of the matter
 But my will gets weak and my thoughts seem to scatter
 But I think it's about forgiveness—forgiveness
 Even if, even if you don't love me anymore

These times are so uncertain, there's a yearning undefined
 People filled with rage
 We all need a little tenderness
 How can love survive in such a graceless age?
 The trust and self-assurance that lead to happiness
 They're the very things we kill, I guess
 Pride and competition cannot fill these empty arms
 And the work I put between us, you know it doesn't keep me warm

I'm learning to live without you now
 But I miss you baby
 The more I know, the less I understand
 All the things I thought I'd figured out, I have to learn again
 I've been trying to get down to the heart of the matter
 But everything changes and my friends seem to scatter
 But I think it's about forgiveness—forgiveness
 Even if, even if you don't love me anymore

There are people in your life who've come and gone
 They let you down; you know they hurt your pride
 You better put it all behind you baby, cause life goes on
 You keep carrying that anger, it'll eat you up inside

I've been trying to get down to the heart of the matter
 But my will gets weak and my thoughts seem to scatter
 But I think it's about forgiveness—forgiveness
 Even if, even if you don't love me
 I've been trying to get down to the heart of the matter
 Because the flesh will get weak and the ashes will scatter
 So I'm thinking about forgiveness—forgiveness
 Even if, even if you don't love me