

**“Tell Me the Stories of Jesus;
Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort”
“Golden Rule and Grace?”**

As we continue in our sermon series “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus; Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort,” we are back in the eighteenth chapter of the gospel of Matthew. This is the chapter we looked at a couple weeks ago about the parable of the lost sheep, which Matthew placed in the midst of paying attention to the “little ones,” the vulnerable, the weak and the children. Jesus ends this chapter with a story in response to the question, “How many time should I forgive?” I suspect many of us ask that question on a regular basis. How many times? This story of Jesus challenges and convicts as to how believers are to behave and live. May this week bring new insights to each of of us as we re-discover how to live and act as we are challenged by this story of Jesus. ----Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Golden Rule and Grace”**

Prayer for the Week

*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.*

(The Lord’s Prayer, Ecumenical Text, #894 United Methodist Hymnal)

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 8/28/17 Matthew 18: 21

The beginning of the chapter begins with the disciples asking “who is the greatest?” Jesus responds by putting a child in the midst of them and saying that if you want to be great, you must become like a child and welcome the little ones. Jesus goes on to talk about behavior and taking care not to make the weak and vulnerable fall. It is after a statement on how to correct someone who is sinning that our text begins. So if one is active in correcting the behavior of a “sinner,” the question Peter asks makes sense. “How often do we forgive someone who sins against me?” “Is seven times enough?” How often are we called to forgive? Is there a limit? Our prayer this week is the one Jesus taught us, it states “Forgive us as we forgive.” Today, slowly say the Lord’s Prayer and meditate on each sentence.

Tuesday, 8/29 /17 Matthew 18: 22-27

Jesus’ answer to Peter is not just “no!” Jesus says we must forgive seventy times 7 times....same person same sin! Then he begins this story. It is so beautiful: a servant owes his king a huge amount, ten thousand talents. One commentary said that was about three billion dollars. THREE BILLION!!!! There was no way he could ever pay it back. The king decided to sell his servants property along with the servant, his wife and children in order to recuperate some of his losses. The servant throws himself on the king’s mercy. He promises he will do whatever it takes to repay his debt. The king has pity and not only releases him but FORGIVES him the entire debt! The servant and his family is free! Free from worry, free from a mountain of debt and free from all their belongings being sold and they themselves were free! What do you think that freedom felt like? Have you ever experienced that kind of freedom, of forgiveness?

Wednesday, 8/30/17 Matthew 18: 28-35

What a surprise when the servant goes out and strong arms a fellow servant. This servant owed the first money equal to a hundred days wages (so about three and a half months of wages.) When the other servant cannot pay, the one who had been forgiven throws him in prison until the debt is paid. What is going on here? How can this be? It’s outrageous! The other servants were outraged and told the king at which point the king has the first servant thrown in prison for his debt. Jesus says, “look God expects you to forgive and be merciful...every time.” Maybe that is why praying the Lord’s Prayer is so important. It is a reminder that we “are forgiven in the same amount as we forgive.” This is not an easy task for anyone. Today, pray the Lord’s Prayer and ask that you might be able to be as merciful and as forgiving as God.

Thursday, 8/31/17 Romans 14: 1-8

Rome had a variety of spiritual practices in the church. Even in the 21st century, different churches have different practices for people of faith. Some churches fast regularly, some have women cover their heads, some, even today, don’t eat pork, some do not drink alcohol or dance or use tobacco. Paul’s letter reminds the church at Rome that not to judge how another practices their faith. One may choose to be a vegetarian or consume alcohol, but Paul is concerned with whether or not a believer’s behavior adversely affects another, particularly someone new to faith. We belong to God, and if it is possible our lives should reflect that faith. Are there faith practices that judge? Do your faith practices help others connect to Jesus?

Friday, 9/01/17 Romans 14: 9-12

For Paul, the bottom line is that we are all accountable to God and we should not judge one another or look down on one another. It ties into Jesus story of forgiveness, as we are forgiven in direct proportion to how much we forgive. If we are judging others, then we are not forgiving, as we are not living, dying or behaving as if we belong to God. Today, spend some time figuring out what triggers your judgment and what makes it difficult to forgive. Say the Lord’s Prayer and ask God to help you learn to truly forgive.