

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 15TH-16TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

THE ONE (MATTHEW 18:10-14)

"...DON'T DESPISE ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES"

After telling His disciples that Christians must be cautious not to offend or mislead, Jesus goes on to say that **we must treat all people with a sense of value.**

- One of the major themes of the Gospel is Jesus' love for people, even the marginalized and lost. **Jesus is teaching us that we are to share that love for others.**

ANGELS WATCHING AND REPORTING

Jesus tells us that "their angels continually view the face of my Father." This means angels constantly report the needs of God's people and that the church is responsible to help as much as we can.

- Heaven is working for us, God is personal, and His eyes never leave us.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK?"

The parable of the straying sheep is about a believer moving from righteous living and falling back into a pattern of sin.

- Jesus values all believers equally, but in order to clear up any misconceptions about people who fall back into sin, Jesus explains how valuable "backsliders" are to Him.

A GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL SAVIOR

The story of leaving the 99 to pursue the 1 shows the grace and mercy of a personal Savior. Though God never leaves any of us, the parable illustrates **God's pursuit** of the rebellious and lost.

- **God lovingly pursues, but we also have to accept Him. We're given a choice, and many choose to remain a stray.**

"...IT IS NOT THE WILL OF YOUR FATHER"

Because we have a choice in the salvation process, God's will for us is not always done.

- It is God's desire that all will go to heaven, but He knows that many will choose selfish desires over Him. **We must remember that no matter how distant from God someone may be, His will is for their salvation and the church is to join the pursuit.**

ADDRESSING OFFENSES (MATTHEW 18:15-20)

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Jesus tells us how to deal with offenses and sinful behavior within the church. Usually we only think of church discipline when it comes to "big" sin, but all actions against the Word should be held into account.

- **We're to hold each other accountable in a loving, respectful, and proper manner, not gossiping or slandering.**

THE PROCESS

When we know of a sin or we get offended by another Christian, we are to: 1) Go to them privately. 2) Take another person or possibly two if one-on-one doesn't work. 3) Then, we are to take it to church leadership.

- We often disregard Jesus' process to deal with sin and offenses. **Failing to follow this model will ruin relationships and hurt the body.**

THE MOTIVE IS LOVE AND RESTORATION

Going in private gives the person the opportunity to talk and avoid more shame. If that doesn't work, bringing another person shows that others also care. If leadership is involved it hopefully shows the severity of the sin/offense.

- **This kind of care is more effective in winning others back to God or possibly bringing them to Christ for the first time.**

WHAT IF THEY DON'T RESPOND?

Jesus tells us that if people don't respond, treat them like "a Gentile and a tax collector." This means we still love, pray for, and show respect, but they're no longer considered Christians.

- 1 Cor. 5 tells us **to avoid fellowshiping with people that claim the faith but knowingly live in sin. This turning from them will hopefully get their attention.**

THERE'S THAT "BINDING AND LOOSING" AGAIN

Remember, Jesus is giving authority to the disciples to communicate and uphold heavenly principles on earth. Discipline of Jesus followers is a heavenly doctrine, and the followers of Jesus have the authority to "loose" it.

- We need to **protect biblical theology, address sin, and give the opportunity for people who've strayed to be restored.**

TAKING THINGS OUT OF CONTEXT

V19-20 may be the most misunderstood scriptures in the NT. Jesus is not saying the prayers of two people are better than one (that would negate the effectiveness of His alone time).

- "Two or three...in My name" is referring to the process of church discipline and leading one back to God. **When we do things His way, He is with us in the process.**

FORGIVING (MATTHEW 18:21-35)

WE ARE TO FORGIVE, BUT HOW MANY TIMES?

Once again, Peter speaks up for the 12 and asks how many times the church and individuals should extend forgiveness. Jewish culture allotted 3 times, so Peter was being generous by suggesting 7.

- Jesus then shows Peter that **mankind's generosity pales in comparison to God's grace and forgiveness.**

70X7=490 TIMES!

When Jesus responded with 70x7 He was basically saying that we are to forgive as many times as someone **genuinely seeks it.**

- This doesn't mean we open the church or ourselves to dangerous situations, but that **we don't carry a grudge or hatred in our hearts.** We're called to be **"harmless as doves but as wise as serpents."**

A PARABLE ABOUT FORGIVING OTHERS

The King in this parable is God, and we are the servants indebted to a king that we can't afford to pay back.

- **We will all have to "settle our accounts" one day before the King.** Though we will all come up short by our actions, **if we've followed Him, the King will show us grace and forgive our insurmountable debt.**

SHOWING GRACE LIKE WE'VE BEEN SHOWN GRACE

If we have experienced the grace of the King, we should show grace to people that have wronged or owed us. Instead, we often act like the servant who choked his debtor.

- This parable is referring to other Christians, but the principles apply to all relationships. **We are to love like He has loved us.**

MERCILESSNESS SHOULD "DISTRESS" US

When "the other servants saw what had taken place, they were deeply distressed...and reported to their Master" how the man refused grace to the debtor.

- Jesus is a perfect balance of mercy and justice, but the Bible states that mercy is greater (J.s. 2:13). **Seeing a lack grace and mercy in our culture should disturb us.**

THEY REPORTED IT TO THE KING

The realization of the ugliness of the world and even things inside the church should be taken straight to the Lord in prayer.

- God is protective of His children and He won't let injustice go unaccounted for (v34). Though Christians should know this, **we often take justice into our own hands making things even worse.**

WE ACT IN ACCORDANCE TO HIS WORD

This doesn't mean Christians are to remain silent in times of injustice, but that we are to address it in a Christ-like manner. Jesus said that His followers must "forgive his brother or sister from [their] heart." This means **real change starts on a personal level! We must strive to change one heart at a time through love and mercy!**

THE LIGHT AND SALT OF THE WORLD?

- **Light cannot allow darkness to occupy the same space.** Are we lovingly addressing our personal sin and the sins of our brothers and sisters? Are we doing it Jesus' way?
- Are we protecting theology and seeking to restore people?

WHAT ABOUT WHAT I'M DOING?

- We often speak of what others are doing or not doing, **but have we asked ourselves what our contribution to making the world a better place has been?**
- Have we shown mercy and grace? **Have we lived the Gospel? Have we shared the Gospel?** Have we forgiven "from our heart" the people that have wronged us?
- Do we intentionally seek to build bridges with strayed believers and those who haven't met Christ yet? Do we speak kindly? Do we respect others? **Do we genuinely love?**

INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

Have we accepted our responsibility to be **loving, gracious, and merciful light bearers** called to **go out into a dark world aiming to touch one heart at a time through the power of God's Spirit?**