

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

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

LOST SHEEP (MATTHEW 18:10-14)

Jesus has been instructing His disciples on the kind of Christian community and family they are to create in His absence.

- It's to be a community where we view each other as precious children in the eyes of God, and we do everything we can to not mislead or influence each other to sin (18:5-9).
- We're not to "despise" ("think little of", "look downon") anyone in this community (vs. 10).

Jesus is commanding us to treat one another with a sense of value and respect.

- In fact, God values His children so much that He's assigned angels to protect and minister to them, and those angels see the face of the Father (vs. 11).
- God loves and protects His children with close, personal, and intimate care- when we devalue His children, we disrespect Him!

Jesus then invites us to enter a story that illustrates the Father's love and protectiveness or His children with the phrase, "what do you think?" (vs. 12).

- There's a common misconception about God's love for us and our value in His eyes and it is that if a believer sins or strays away, they're less valuable in the Father's eyes.

The shepherd in Jesus' story is willing to leave the ninety-nine other sheep in His flock to find the one who went astray.

- In fact, the one lost sheep is so valuable to its owner that he's willing to search for it continually through probably a dangerous mountainous terrain.
- Upon finding this sheep, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray (vs. 13).

God's children are infinitely valuable to Him- not because of their performance or behavior.

- They're so valuable to Him that He's not willing that any of them should ever become lost and perish (vs. 14).
- When a believer goes astray and wanders into sin, they are so valuable to our Father (even in their straying) that He pursues them.

Why? Because He loves us too much to allow us be destroyed by our sin when we wander.

- God pursues us love to restore us to fellowship with Him.
- Sometimes He allows the pain, emptiness, and meaninglessness of life apart from Him to draw us back to Him- but He pursues us nonetheless.

RESTORATION FROM SIN (MATTHEW 18:15-20)

If God the Father loves His children so much that He pursues them whenever they wander into sin, then this is how we're to love one another.

- Not only are we to love and protect each other, but we're also told to restore one another.
- This is a foundational passage for understanding church discipline and restoration, something that is essential in the health of a church.

The concept of "church discipline" is sometimes only thought of regarding serious offenses that require official and formal meetings.

- In reality, it's more biblically understood as any effort made by any individual or group of individuals in the church to help turn a straying believer back to righteous living.
- Why should we want to be a part of any group that will call us out if we stray into sin?

Because one of the most loving thing we can give another believer is Christ-like accountability that will prevent them from straying into sin that can destroy their life.

- The wisest and most humble thing we can do as a believer is to open ourselves up to that loving accountability from other believers.
- This creates a community of authenticity, holiness, vulnerability, and humility.

Jesus addresses how this kind of community of accountability and restoration is to work.

- "If your brother sins against you..." (vs. 15). The situation most likely is concerning another believer who has sinned directly against you and doesn't come to you for forgiveness, or someone caught in sin that refuses to repent.
- The instruction is about a believer who is persisting in unrepentant sin- not someone who has made a mistake and is sorrowful, repentant, and trying to change.

Step 1: Private Correction (vs. 15)

Step 2: Small Group Clarification (vs. 16)

Step 3: Church Admonition (vs. 17a)

Step 4: Church Disfellowship (vs. 17b)

The goal for church discipline is always forgiveness and loving restoration.

- Yet stubborn pride and hardheartedness are forces to be reckoned with.
- Just as Jesus granted the keys of the Kingdom to His disciples (Mt. 16:19), He reminds them this process on earth is done with His authority (vs. 18).

When the Church comes together to correct someone who strays (even if only two or three are there and agree in this process), Jesus Himself is involved right alongside us (vs. 20).

- Consequences for NOT practicing church discipline are disastrous (the church in Corinth).
- The Church is to be holy, orderly, and a place of grace AND truth.

AN UNFORGIVING SERVANT (MATTHEW 18:21-34)

When we deal with other believers who stray from their faith, we may be tempted to become merciless and judgmental of them- especially if they've sinned against us.

- But when we adopt that kind of heart posture towards those who have strayed or have wronged us, we're forgetting how much mercy the Father has shown us.
- Forgiveness is a foundational characteristic of the family of God.

Peter thought he was being generous by suggesting that he should forgive someone 7 times for the same offense, because Jewish tradition taught that 3 times was sufficient.

- But the grace and generosity of humanity doesn't even measure up to God's standard.
- Jesus answers, "seventy times seven"- the number itself isn't literal, it simply means, "keep on forgiving and don't hold a grudge".

To illustrate His point, Jesus tells a parable of a man who owed an astronomical sum of money, clearly an amount he could never repay to the king (vs. 24-25).

- And yet, out of sheer compassion, the king forgave his servant the entire debt (vs. 27).
- But once he'd been set free, the servant finds a co-worker who owed him money (vs. 28).

The fellow servant owed the man a "hundred denarii"- which is about four months' salary.

- The servant attacked the man and demanded that he be repaid immediately (vs. 28-29).
- He inflicted on his fellow servant the punishment he had escaped and had the man thrown in prison (vs. 30).

The other servants of the household went and told the king (vs. 31).

- And the king was so angry at his servant's hypocrisy and mistreatment of his fellow worker that he had him "delivered to the jailers until he should pay all his debt" (vs. 32).
- Jesus says, "so also my heavenly Father will do...if you do not forgive" (vs. 33).

Through Christ's death on the cross in our place, we have been forgiven an infinite debt that we could never pay on our own.

- This payment for our sin- the Son of God- was provided to us completely because of God's discretion, not because we earned it.
- There is an infinite surplus of forgiveness for us as His children (Lam. 3:23, 1 John 1:9).

And yet, for so many of us we refuse to extend that same grace, forgiveness, and mercy that we've claimed to receive to others when they wrong us.

- Think about what Jesus is saying in verse 35- He's not saying that we earn God's forgiveness when we forgive or that we lose God's forgiveness when we don't.
- Rather, our willingness to forgive others reveals if we've been truly forgiven by God.

We reveal the true condition of our hearts and the state of our soul by the way we treat others.

- When our hearts are humble and repentant because we've truly been born again and experienced God's forgiveness, we forgive others.
- But where there's only pride and a desire for revenge, maybe it's because we've never truly repented and received God's forgiveness for ourselves.

RESTORATION.

- God created this world in perfection (Gen. 1-2), but we rebelled against His Word and introduced the curse of sin and death into the world (Gen. 3).
- Through Jesus, God dealt with sin and opened the door for us to be restored (2 Cor. 5:17).
- The day is coming when the creation will be restored in the Kingdom (Matt. 19:28-29).
- God loves and wants to restore those who stray from Him (vs. 10-14).
- God wants us to love and restore those who stray from the Church (vs. 15-20).
- God's desire is for us to restore broken relationships by showing forgiveness and mercy towards those who have wronged us (vs. 21-35).

What parts of my life is God pursuing so that He can restore me fully to Himself?

Who in my life does God want me to point back to Him so He can restore?

What relationship that's been broken does God want me to restore through forgiveness and/or reconciliation (if possible)?