

+Vespers+

*Guitar led Lutheran Worship*

# InContext



## *The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant*

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### **The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant**

#### **The Gospel According to St. Matthew, the 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter**

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

### **The Parable In Our Context – The Unforgiving Servant**

**Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"**

Most of the Rabbis during Jesus' time agreed that if you forgave someone three times and they sinned against you again, you were under no religious obligation to forgive them again. Peter is asking this question sort of rhetorically, "Jesus, how many times should I forgive someone? 7 times?" He probably expected Jesus to say, "7 times?!?! Woah woah woah, let's not get carried away here..."

- **How many times can you forgive someone before it becomes really hard to forgive them again? Have you ever refused to forgive someone?**

**Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."**

Jesus isn't saying "490 times." But what if He was?

- **If you were bound, as a Christian, to forgive someone 490 times what would that be like for you? Would it mean forgiving people more often than what you do now? How would you keep track of what number you were on?**

**Jesus replied...**

The story of the Unforgiving Servant...

#### **Contextualizing**

- **What elements of this story are foreign to our context today?**
- **What do you think Jesus is trying to say in this story?**
- **Join in writing a contextualized paraphrase of the parable.**

**Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.**

Do you notice something missing in this exchange between the master and the servant? The servant isn't pleading anymore. In Christianese, he's not "confessing his sin".

- **Do you think you are more likely to forgive if you've been forgiven? If you've been forgiven but you don't forgive – do you think it cheapens the forgiveness you received?**

**So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.**

There is Good News here behind a very demanding statement from Jesus. He says “My Father is going to toss you in jail if you don’t forgive...” But He would never expect you to forgive people if you weren’t forgiven first by Him.

- **Do you feel like you understand forgiveness? How does forgiveness show up in your life? What does it mean to you to be forgiven?**



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Please don't throw this away. Take it home and use it devotionally or leave it for others.