Tonight as we continue with our series of messages on “The Parables of Jesus” I would like for you to please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter eighteen. For now I just want to read verses 21 and 22.

Read: Matthew 18:21-22

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

The parable we are looking at this evening is often called “The Parable of The Unmerciful Servant” or “The Parable of The Unforgiving Servant.”

The telling of this parable was prompted by this question Peter asked Jesus in verse 21........

v. 21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “LORD, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?

(Note: Peter probably thought he was being pretty generous since most of the Jewish Rabbi’s in those days taught THREE TIMES was sufficient.) But notice Jesus’ response to Peter’s question in verse 22.........

v. 22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” (Some translations say, “Seventy times seven.”)

Jesus did not intend for Peter (or you and me for that matter) to take his answer to mean there is actually a “numeric” limit to the number
of times we are to forgive someone who sins against us. Jesus’ intent was that Peter (as well as you and me) understand the truth that “the spirit of forgiveness knows no limits.

You see, forgiveness is a matter of the **HEART** not the **mind**. Our mind tends to keep **RECORDS** of wrongs and offences others commit against us. But the heart that is filled with “the spirit of forgiveness” can “let go” no matter how numerous or serious the offences might be.

To illustrate this truth, Jesus now proceeds to tell His disciples “The Parable of The Unmerciful Servant.” This parable is divided into two very distinct parts, so let’s look at each part separately, then consider the truths Jesus is teaching us.

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I. A Staggering Debt Is Forgiven (vs. 23-27)

1. It was not unusual for **KINGS** to audit their books in Jesus’ day to see if their stewards had been faithful in paying their debts.

2. Imagine the King’s surprise when He discovered one of his subjects owed him **10,000 talents**.

3. Of course “a talent” means nothing to us, because we don’t use the ancient Jewish monetary system. So let me put this man’s DEBT in terms we can understand.

   1 talent was the equivalent of 15 year’s wages. But this man didn’t owe just one talent, he owed **10,000 TALENTS**.

   10,000 TALENTS would be the equivalent of 150,000 years of wages. In other words he would have to work 150,000 years to pay off his enormous debt.

   Just insert your annual income into this picture and you get an idea of what this man owed.

   Let’s say you make $30,000 a year.

   
   $30,000 dollars \times 150,000 \text{ years} = $45 \text{ billion}
4. The point Jesus was making is obvious! This man owed such a staggering debt he couldn’t possibly pay it back in one hundred lifetimes.

5. When the King ordered that the debtor, his wife, all his children and all his material possessions be sold to repay the debt, the debtor fell to his knees before the King and begged for forgiveness.

6. Realizing the man could never pay back the debt he owed, the King took pity on him and out of His great grace and mercy, forgave the man of his entire debt and set him free.

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This brings us to PART II of this parable....

II. An Small Debt Is Remembered (vs. 28-31)

READ----Verses 28-31

1. After being forgiven his “staggering debt” this “Unmerciful Servant” is on his way home. You can just picture him “whistling a happy tune” and “kicking his heels together.”

2. But pretty soon he runs into a man who owes him some money. Jesus gives the amount as ONE HUNDRED DENARIII.

   One denarii was equal to about 25 cents or 1 day’s wage.
   So 100 denarii would be equal to about $25 dollars.

3. Now that wasn’t necessarily a miniscule amount, but compared to the “staggering debt” the “Unmerciful Servant” had just been forgiven, $25.00 was “chump change.”

4. But here’s another major difference between the first part of this parable and the second part.

   Remember earlier the “Unmerciful Servant” had fallen to his knees before the King and begged forgiveness and
promised to pay back what he owed, even though that was impossible. And remember the King responded with grace, mercy and forgiveness.

5. Now contrast the forgiving spirit of the King with the unforgiving spirit of the “Unmerciful Servant.”

After grabbing the man around the throat and choking him and demanding that the man “fork up” the $25 buck he owed him, VERSE 29 tells us “the debtor fell to his knees and begged forgiveness and promised to pay the debt. (sound familiar?)

The fact-of-the-matter was he could indeed pay it back in 100 days. Remember the “Unmerciful Servant” couldn’t pay his debt back in 150,000 years!

6. But instead of showing the man the same grace, mercy and forgiveness he had received from the King earlier, the “Unmerciful Servant” had the man thrown into prison until he could pay back the debt.

Now let’s move on to the third part of this parable and that is.......
God a “staggering debt” we could never possibly repay.

3. Think of the thousands upon thousands of sins you and I have committed against God over the course of our lifetime.

J.J. Ross in his book “The Mystery of The Kingdom” says in regard to this:

“There are debts for time and talents wasted; debts for offenses committed, debts for duties neglected, debts for gospel privileges squandered. There are debts almost without number and variety that all of us owe to God.”

4. You see, when you stack ALL OUR SINFUL THOUGHTS……. ALL OUR SINFUL WORDS……..ALL OUR SINFUL FEELINGS….. ALL OUR SINFUL DEEDS……..AND ALL OUR SINS OF OMISION on top of each other, OUR DEBT IS STAGGERING!

And yet by His awesome GRACE AND MERCY God has FORGIVEN US of our staggering debt by accepting THE BLOOD OF HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON AS PAYMENT FOR OUR SINS.

5. But then comes the second part of this parable, the part that addresses OUR FORGIVENESS TOWARD THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US.

Who is “the fellow servant” in this parable? He is somebody you or I know.

-Somebody who has wronged us.

-Somebody who has offended us.

-Somebody who spoke hurtful words to us or about us.

-Somebody who betrayed us.

-Somebody who cheated us out of some money or out of a job position……or someone who cheated on us in marriage.
-Somebody who lied to us or about us.

Perhaps that “fellow servant” is one of your relatives or a friend or former friend, perhaps he or she is a boss or a co-worker........or a neighbor.......or even a fellow Church member.

6. Jesus is teaching us that whether that person has wronged us ONE TIME.......SEVEN TIMES SEVENTY TIMES.......or SEVEN THOUSAND TIMES.......the “debt” they owe us doesn’t even come close to the “staggering debt” God forgave us by the blood of Christ.

7. Jesus is NOT teaching us that we cannot address a wrong committed against us by someone else. In fact, before He told this “Parable of The Unmerciful Servant” Jesus gave us the scriptural steps we should take when someone has sinned against us or wronged us in some way.

Back up to VERSES 15-17

8. One reason why many Christians develop an “unforgiving spirit” is because they don’t seek to resolve these matters in the way Jesus instructed.

Most of us don’t like to confront people. Confrontation is both unpleasant and uncomfortable. So to avoid confrontation, many of us instead harbor anger and bitterness and resentment toward an individual who has wronged us. And as a result we develop a “critical, unforgiving spirit” toward that individual.

9. Notice the unmerciful servant CONFRONTED the one who owed him a debt, but he did it in a “spirit of vindictiveness” rather than a “spirit of forgiveness.”

The moment that man fell to his knees and begged forgiveness and offered to pay back what he owed, the unmerciful servant should have forgiven him and let the matter go. But he didn’t! He refused to forgive
the man and had him thrown into prison.

10. When you and I compare a wrong someone has committed against us with the COUNTLESS WRONGS WE HAVE COMMITTED AGAINST GOD, how can we ever choose NOT to forgive?

11. Relationships within God’s family as well as all human relationships in general are IMPOSSIBLE without a FORGIVING SPIRIT.

We are ALL SINNERS! We are ALL DEBTORS! All of us HAVE BEEN WRONGED BY SOMEONE and HAVE WRONGED SOMEONE!

12. Peace and harmony can only prevail when we learn to “forgive our debtors as God has forgiven our debts.”

CONCLUSION

The official Spanish name for the site is the Isle of Pelicans, but nobody knows it by that name. It is best known as ALCATRAZ, one of the most escape-proof prisons ever built.

From 1933 to 196 Alcatraz served as a U.S. Federal Prison, and during that time 26 prisoners tried to escape, only five succeeded.

In addition to being surrounded by the ice cold waters of San Francisco Bay, Alcatraz had extra high walls, double-lock doors, guards armed with machine guns and a prison staff that couldn’t be bribed.

The world’s worst prison however is not Alcatraz or Devil’s Island, for those places only confine the body. The worst prison in the world is an “unforgiving spirit.” It is the self-imposed prison one creates for himself by refusing to forgive someone who has wronged him.
An unforgiving spirit imprisons the mind, heart, body and spirit of a man. And the only escape is to forgive! A price many are not willing to pay.

Are you a prisoner of your own unforgiving spirit? Are you held captive by your own unwillingness to release someone who has wronged you from their debt?

You will never know peace until you release that individual from the debt they owe, just as God released you from your staggering debt through the precious blood of His Son, Jesus Christ!