

Forgiveness and Even Reconciliation

Thomas Robinson, *Jesus' Call to the Way* 2, August 20, 2017

Matthew 5:21-24; 6:9-15

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder'; [Ex 20:13] and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' [Num 35:10-30]

²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever says to his brother, '**Idiot!**' will be liable to the council (Sanhedrin); and whoever says, '**Fool!**' will be liable to the Gehenna of fire.

²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

6:⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into testing, but deliver us from the evil one.'

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others, your Father will your offenses.

Matthew 4:17, 5:1-4

¹⁷ Jesus began to preach, "Change your way of thinking, for the kingdom that belongs to God's realm is right here." ...

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a hillside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom that belongs to God's realm is theirs. ⁴ Blessed are those who are mourning, for they will be comforted....

Matthew 18:21-22

²¹ 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?"

²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."

Mark 11:25

²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ The one who knew no sin, he made sin for our sake, so that we might become God's righteous faithfulness in him.

Psalm 103:2-4

² Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits – | ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, | ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit | and crowns you with love and compassion....

Colossians 3:12-13

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive (give grace to) one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive (give grace) as the Lord forgave (gave grace to) you.

A Kingdom Breaking in among the Broken

Jesus proclaims the kingdom/rule of God. People throng to him, sick, suffering, curious.

He calls ordinary people to follow him. And they do. He begins teaching on a hillside.

He pronounces blessings. Not ideals but naming those among whom this kingdom is breaking in. Not the religious, powerful, wealthy. Poor in spirit, mourning, meek.

Among them God's ancient promises to Israel are coming to fullness, unexpectedly.

Jesus never condescends. These are the light of the world. The cutting edge of God's rule.

He calls them to the wisdom, the life of God's realm, beginning now in our world.

Anger and Contempt ... or Reconciliation

Jesus knew how needy and self-deceived we are, how self-centered. Our selves and our idols push out God and his gift of life. Jesus challenges us to get over ourselves.

When he contrasts true wisdom with ordinary instructions for life (law), he begins by setting murder side by side with anger and contempt – escalating judicial threats!

We see our anger as reasonable. That person is a fool! Still, the anger corrupts me!

Jesus challenges disciples to outlandish reconciliation. Leave the offering. Go back home.

Be reconciled first. Then offer to God. But, but, but.... Let God back in. God's life.

Receiving and Sharing God's Forgiveness and Grace

In teaching his followers to pray, Jesus puts special stress on asking for forgiveness as we have forgiven. Here we approach God's heart, the center of his kingdom, the great promise of a new covenant. We want God's forgiveness but have trouble forgiving.

Jesus speaks of debts/offenses: claims against someone that would rightly demand repayment, punishment. Forgiveness only deals with and confronts real wrongs. It doesn't excuse them or explain them away. (Then no forgiveness is needed.)

Here engagement with God reaches deepest. Forgiveness is hard! Forgiveness is a rejection of fairness in favor of grace. We let go our fair demands. We absorb the debt, the offense. We release. Jesus is insistent! We need God's grace: In spite of our offenses, God dies for us and welcomes us into new life. In forgiveness, we experience the joy that causes God to choose forgiveness and grace rather than revenge.

Where God's kingdom, true wisdom, breaks in, we become people practicing forgiveness and reconciliation. God's heart breaking into a world that disdains such grace.