

I have chosen in this talk to put together two accounts---the one in Matthew is a parable and the one in Luke is an historic interview with import on the same line of teaching. In Matthew 18 the Lord has been discussing the matter of forgiveness and settling issues correctly with a disgruntled brother. To emphasize the reality and vigor of this teaching, He gives the parable of the unforgiving servant. This man was in hopeless debt (vs. 24) and under the condemnation of his master who was sentencing him to a life of slavery along with all of his family (vs. 25). But he pleaded his case with the lord so effectively that his debt was forgiven (vs 27) and then, perhaps in relief, he went out and suddenly discovered a fellow servant who owed him something of a much smaller sort than his debt had been...but he took the servant by the throat (!) vs 28, and demanded instant payment which, when he could not receive it, became the basis for throwing the indebted man into prison. Other servants were bothered by this and told it to the lord who then in anger took back his forgiveness and put the wretch into the original judgment. Wow!

II. The point of the parable:

Remember that a parable is chiefly intended to stress one truth and not to have all the details pressed. The big point is that we should appreciate forgiveness to the degree that we are willing to forgive and thereby to show love. If we are grateful for God's forgiveness it should be a delight to show it to others as well and if we are unwilling to do that, how can we be sure we have experienced God's forgiveness? Be very careful about a narrow hardness of thinking that allows you to think of hostility towards others while basking in the love of God yourself.

III. The Lesson may be summarized something like this:

- A. Seek the healing of others...follow the Lord's instruction in getting it and do not deny the joy of your own forgiveness by being harsh and unswerving in areas where forgiveness is needed.
- B. Seek a closeness with God that allows you a closeness with others and reflects God's care for you and for them.

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MESSAGE # 5: THE GREAT FEAST: TAKING THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL