

Tuesday, February 28th, 2023
LLP Healing prayer service on Zoom

Perpetual forgiveness, how to stay in the mercy zone - Frank O'Keefe

Gospel: **Matthew 18:21-35**

Worship Song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUQv1mHxc_0

Message:

Whenever we speak about the important Christian virtue of forgiveness, we often isolate our thinking in terms of specific instances where someone has wronged us, or the reverse, where we have wronged someone, and need to ask for forgiveness. The gospel today attempts to highlight the nature of forgiveness as an act of compassion and mercy, and this is, in fact, where our focus should be. But the real key to forgiveness is ultimately for us to understand how to stay in the mercy zone, thus eliminating as much as possible those emotions and reactions that cause the problems in the first place.

When Peter asks Jesus how often we must forgive, Jesus' famous answer of 77 times is given to illustrate the simple teaching that forgiveness must be unlimited, and that this is a key principle of living in God's Kingdom of love and compassion. When we in fact place any limit upon our forgiveness of wrongs, we have already stepped out of the mercy zone and into sinful human thinking. It is just as important not to take offense at everything as it is to forgive.

The stark contrast to the debtor who, after his own large debt was forgiven, but then mercilessly demanded payment of a much smaller amount from his own debtor serves well to illustrate that there can be not even a hint of hypocrisy in our personal administration of this important commandment. The first debtor learned and understood nothing at all from his master's compassion toward him, and so, in the end, when he was reported, suffered greatly from his own anger and inflexibility. Essentially, he condemned himself by not following the example of compassion offered to him.

Herein then lies the essence of this instruction. It is precisely a continued hypocritical anger and inflexibility toward others who offend us that causes us to fall into greater error and unforgiveness. Until we can understand things from God's perspective, we will not fully grasp the lesson here.

In the mercy zone of the Kingdom of heaven, that place which lies closely to the throne of the father, there is nothing but purest love and compassion radiating outward to all directions. It is not so much that God judges us for our own sins, as that, in the midst of human error, we fail to see the eternal depths of what compassion really is. Just as God's light overcomes darkness, God's compassion overcomes judgment. What we really need to do is simply partake more fully of the love power that lies close to God's throne, immerse ourselves in that, and live within its powerful influence.

In the end, our hearts are only fully changed when we soak in God's presence very often, and always strive to remain in that state of consciousness. This is what it means to pray always that we may be saved. Forgiveness is only easy if we stay in the mercy zone of heaven. Soak there, stay there, and live there.

Soaking music: Julie True - Breathe of Heaven, The Mercy Zone