Good morning, little flock. This morning, we continue in our series, “The Parables of Jesus.” In our reading in Luke, we see Jesus putting into action the principle and doctrine of forgiveness. He shares the parable of two debtors. This woman was known in the city as a sinner. Jesus is saying to Simon, “I’ve been in your house, but she has been my host.” She knew her need for forgiveness. (Thank God for forgiveness!!) She had been forgiven much. This, too, is my story. This is the Gospel. God chooses to forgive us in grace. The cross, family, is where we receive forgiveness. In our reading in Matthew, we see again another parable in regard to forgiveness. My old friend Peter, perhaps trying to show how righteous he thinks he is, asks a question in Matthew 18:21: “How often shall I forgive my brother?” While the parable in Luke shows us that the cross is where we find forgiveness, the cross is also where we are taught forgiveness. Christian, each of us has been forgiven much; therefore, we are to forgive much, and *often*. *Un*forgiveness is a bondage that chokes out the abundant life in Christ we are promised. To understand all that Christ has done for us but then to refuse to forgive those who have wronged us is to be like the unforgiving slave in the parable in Luke.

And let’s just cut to the chase. To harbor unforgiveness as a disciple is disobedience and disobedience is sin. “I can’t” forgive really means “I don’t want to.”

But, you say, “Pastor Chris! You talk about this a lot.” Well, so did Jesus! The Word of God has much to say about forgiveness. To harbor unforgiveness is to create your own dungeon (Matthew 18:34). We miss out on God’s best for us. As [Ephesians 4:31-32](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians4%3A31-32&version=NKJV) says, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, [a] clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” We are to have this attitude to glorify and honor Christ. Moreover, there is great freedom in forgiveness. So many of you have experienced terrible trauma—awful things in your life during which someone has hurt you. To forgive does not mean to excuse what has happened. It means that the Christian refuses to give that person who has harmed you any more of the headspace and heart-space than should be reserved for our Savior. Forgiveness is healing.

Think about all that Christ has forgiven each of us for. To get an idea of His limitless capacity for forgiveness, remember that Jesus said in the parable that a man owed 10,000 talents. At that time, Herod’s annual revenue for the entire kingdom was about 900 talents. The indebted servant would have had to work 193,000 years to pay back what he owed. The amount of money would have weighed 750,000 pounds. This equates to 9 million ounces of gold. If an ounce of gold sells for $1,953.50, as of January 5, 2021, then the servant owed his master $23 billion 442 million. Despite this massive, inconceivable debt, the master forgave it entirely (see [Matthew 18:27](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew18%3A27&version=NKJV)). Similarly, Jesus has canceled the entire debt each of us owes. And Jesus paid a debt He did not owe: We had a debt of sin we simply could not pay. Family, when we view forgiveness in light of his Holiness, we are motivated to be forgiving people.

Knowing our need for forgiveness helps us understand how to forgive. Holding on to unforgiveness is not holding that person hostage. It’s wrapping ourselves in chains and giving that offending person the key. Forgiving deepens our understanding of grace. Listen, I know forgiving someone who has hurt you is emotionally hard work. It is important to ask the Lord for help! Forgiveness for Christ’s disciples is not optional and not negotiable, receiving it AND giving it! I have to remind myself that what has been done to offend me pales in comparison to what I have done to offend God. And yet He forgave me. He loves me. He continues to forgive me. And as for the person from whom I hold my forgiveness, well, Jesus loves him, too. I do not want to be the Pharisee who says referring to Jesus, “If he knew who they really were, he would have no part with them.” God knows who I really am, and He loves me anyway. In that spirit, you may have to choose to forgive a thousand times. Yes! Do it! As a disciple, it is not an option. The truth sets us free, and the truth says we must forgive ([Matthew 18:35](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew18%3A35&version=NKJV)). We need to forgive for the sake of our own hearts! Each of us must forgive from the heart for the sake of that heart. My choice to forgive supports a decision to let nothing take up residence in my heart that hinders my walk with Jesus. NOTHING! The cross is where all believers receive forgiveness and where Christians learn forgiveness. God help me to forgive.