

Jesus brings True Reconciliation

1. Problem of Forgiveness

- Doing a short series on 'What I love about Jesus'
- Apart from dealing with our sin and reconciling us back to God ... many things I love about Jesus
- One of those things is ... he helps us do life well
- I can't think of a more practical passage of scripture to look at than this passage where Jesus teaches us about forgiveness and reconciliation
- Because reality is all of us are either going through or have been through deep personal pain that has been caused by other people that has hurt us
- It happens to us all the time
- It happens to
 - Married couples
 - Work colleagues
 - School friends
 - Parents & children
 - Churches
- When we hurt others or others hurt us ... it robs us of joy in life
 - We're made as relational beings > made to be in relationship with others
 - In the context of relationships with others you get to experience love, happiness, sympathy, laughter, care, kindness, empathy,
- But we constantly muck it up
 - We constantly hurt, disrespect, ignore, overrun, dis-empower, demean, ridicule, betray others
 - That causes great pain ... and undermines our relationships
 - Takes away the joy of relationships and the joy of life
- But that doesn't mean we just have to put up with fractured relationships
- What we see in this passage today is Jesus gives us the mechanism, resources and power
 - to forgive and reconcile with others
 - to restore relationships that have been fractured
 - to return to that point where we can continue to experience the joy of relationships even after they have been broken and hurt

- Problem is however ... too often we're unwilling to forgive and reconcile with others because they've hurt us
 - They've hurt our pride > dignity
 - Hurt our reputation > our self esteem
 - Angry with them
- Our natural reaction is to say 'No – I can't forgive them. They've caused me too much pain'
- But friends there are two problems when we we're unwilling to forgive and reconcile
- It hurts you ... when you refuse to do it
 - One hurts you now
 - One that hurts you for eternity
- **First – Eternal Suffering**
- See in the parable how the servant is forgiven by the king, but the servant then refuses to forgive a fellow servant
- King hears about it and hauls the first servant back in and ...
 - v34 – *In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.*
- Then the punch line from Jesus to us is ...
 - v35 – *"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*
- Jesus point is ...
 - If you have an unforgiving heart ... it's going to lead you to eternal suffering
- But you say
 - We're saved by grace of God > saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus
 - Our eternal future doesn't depend on what I do, it depends on what Jesus has already done
- That's absolutely true
- However, the King's point to the servant is
 - When you fail to forgive ... when you fail to open your heart to your fellow servant ... it shows you never really opened your heart to my mercy

- Jesus is saying ... if you refuse to forgive your friend / neighbour / work colleague / fellow student / parents / brother / sister in Christ ... this is a sign that you never really opened your heart to the gospel

- **Illustration – Apple Trees**
- Imagine two apple trees > one bearing fruit, the other no fruit
- What do you conclude about those trees?
 - Assume one is healthy and alive > other is diseased and dying
 - Fruit doesn't give it life
 - Fruit reveals whether there's life or not
 - Fruit is a sign of life

- Jesus is saying, there is no better way to see whether you have a real relationship with God or not than the basis of whether you're willing to forgive others or not

- First problem failing to forgive ... hurts you eternally

- **Second – Present Suffering**
- Second problem with an unwillingness to forgive is it hurts us now
- We become trapped > ensnared > burdened
- When you feel angry, hold a grudge, refuse to forgive ... what happens?
 - Become bitter > residual anger that continues to burn within you
 - You become passive aggressive
- You end up imprisoned by this anger and frustration and hurt
 - You're unable to let go, move on
 - Unable to get any peace, have joy
- You're a prisoner of your unwillingness or inability to forgive

- Problem with forgiveness
 - Because we've been hurt > it's hard to do
 - Means we don't want to forgive
 - Problem with that
 - Leads to present suffering as we harbour anger and bitterness
 - Leads to future suffering as shows we haven't truly grasped the good news of Jesus

- So what do you do with that?
 - If it's better that we do forgive and reconcile ... how do we go about it?
 - Parable helps us

2. Parable of Forgiveness

- Parable the king calls in the servant who owes him a huge debt and he forgives him
- Notice what he does in v27
 - *"The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go."*
- Two things
 - Took pity on him
 - Cancelled debt and let him go

Took Pity on Him

- The first thing the king did was take pity on the servant
 - Take pity is not feeling sorry for the person > much more than that
 - Means to have compassion > empathise
 - Elsewhere in NT translated "heart went out for him"
- King's heart went out for the servant
 - It means he was putting himself in his place
 - Having compassion on him and his situation
- To have pity / compassion on a person > for our heart to go out to a person who has wronged you or hurt you ... is to do the hard work of intentionally reminding yourself of how much you have in common them
- You put yourself in their place > you empathise with them
- **Illustration – Parenting**
- Parenting is one of the hardest jobs in the world
 - My kids would agree with me on this
- When they've done the wrong thing ... without a shadow of a doubt ...
 - The times I have parented them well in that situation are the times my heart has gone out for them > when I've shown them compassion
 - The times I have been at my worst as a parent when I have failed to do this
- The difference is when I've taken the time to remember just how much we have in common
 - That either I did the same thing when I was a kid
 - Or I am still making the mistakes they are making ... just in adult ways
- When God helps me to see that ... I'm able to look on them with compassion > my heart can go out to them ... we're able to restore our relationship in a much better way

- **Illustration – Caricatures**

- What stops our hearts going out to others and having compassion on them when they hurt us we often caricature them
- Ben into drawing > likes to draw caricatures
 - Thing about caricatures is they always over emphasises a feature of the person
 - Even if trying to be nice ... always overstate something about their features
 - As evidenced by this caricature he did of me!
- We often do the same when someone hurts us > we caricature them
 - That is we highlight their flaws
 - So if someone does something unkind to you
 - You say "They're a bully!"
 - Someone says to you "why did they do that to you?"
 - You say "Because they're a bully!"
 - They say "Have you ever been unkind to others before?"
 - We reply "Yeah ... but it's complicated! > Not as simple as that > There was this thing that was happening > I'm only human"
- We never say I was unkind because **I'm** a bully
 - No we say "I'm human > I'm three dimensional > there were circumstances"
 - But others are unkind > "they're just a bully!"
- What it means to make your heart go out to a person is to deliberately say to yourself ... "I'm not that different > really I'm just the same"
- One theologian says this
 - *"forgiveness flounders because I exclude my enemy from the community of humanity ... and I exclude myself from the community of sinners"*
- We'll be unable to forgive a person if we continue to think we're superior to the them and forget we too are sinners
 - You may not do exactly the same thing ... but if you're honest you'll know you have done / still do similar things with others
- And when we exclude others from the community of humanity, we are failing to recognise they too are a person with baggage and pain and brokenness and hurts

- When we fail to recognise these things ... it holds us back from our heart going out to them ... taking pity ... showing compassion
- All that ends up happening is we become ensnared in bitterness, pain and sadness
- That's the first thing ... the king identifies with the servant and his heart went out to him

Cancelled his debt & let him go

- Second thing the king does with the servant is he cancels the debt and lets him go
- King calls in this servant who owes him money
 - Turns out the servant owes the king 10,000 talents
- How much was that? Let me put it in today's terms ...
 - Talent in those days worth 6,000 denarii > roman coin of the day
 - Denarii was a days wage for a laborer
 - Assume an average daily wage today is \$300
 - Means 10,000 talents = \$18bn! (\$1.8m x 10,000)
 - James Packer – worth \$6bn
 - Means he owes 3 times what James Packer is worth!!
- See in v25 the servant was unable to pay such a massive debt ... and so his whole family was ordered to be sold into slavery
- However ... this wasn't going to solve the problem
 - Because the top price for a slave in those days was 1 talent ... and most slaves normally went for 1/10th of that or less
 - So selling the man and his family into slavery was never going to be able to clear such a massive debt
 - Like me promising to give over all my pay for the next 40 years of my life to clear an \$18bn debt
 - It's never going to happen
- And so we see the desperate plight this man is in
 - He and his family would have spent their entire lives in slavery
 - The man was never going to be able to pay off the debt
 - And so we see in v26 he begs for mercy
- Surprisingly ...
 - the king took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go

- Surprising because to do so meant the king has to incur an \$18bn loss in order to pardon the man
 - That's a massive cost to the king in order to forgive him
- But that's what forgiveness is > absorbing the cost of the debt rather than making a person pay it themselves

- **Illustration – Cancelled Debts**
- My in-laws lent us their 4WD and caravan for us to go on holidays around Tasmania
 - Melbourne > Ferry > two weeks driving around Tassie > Ferry back
 - Not a scratch
 - Get home and unhook the caravan, clean it all up
 - Park the 4WD on grass off the street out of harms way
- That night was the crazy wind storms we had in Sydney > the night told to go home early and stay indoors
 - During the night, the basketball ring (on stand) was blown over ... onto the car
 - Damaged the front of the car
 - All that way around Tassie, 3,000km, not a scratch
 - At home > parked > not moving > damaged!
- We offered Liana's mum and dad to pay for it
 - But they let it go > they cancelled the debt
- But just because they forgave us doesn't mean the loss disappears into thin air
 - Either they have to pay to get it fixed or
 - They leave it and lose money when they sell it because its damaged
 - Either way ... they pay instead of me

- When there's a loss ... either the person who incurs the loss pays ... or the person who experiences the loss pays > one or the other

- When someone wrongs you ... you can either make them pay or you pay
- How does that work when we're not talking about money?
- When someone wrongs you ... you experience a loss
 - Loss of pride
 - Loss of respect > reputation
 - Loss of self esteem > dignity
 - There's a cost and you feel it and it hurts > the person owes you

- What do you do?

- You can make them pay
 - Gossip > Slander them
 - Revenge > lash out at them > abuse them
 - Ignore them > avoid contact / talking with them > unpleasant > let them know you're not happy with them > make snide remarks to them or in front of them
- Then ... as you see them suffering either from your actions or circumstances in their life ... the debt eventually comes down
 - Only once the debt has been paid because they've suffered enough are you willing to forgive
- But what's this have the effect of doing?
 - It turns you into a horrible person and nothing like the person Jesus wants you to be
 - You become ensnared in your bitterness
 - Constantly mean spirited towards people who wrong you
 - Constantly sniping and grumbling against people
 - Become a very unpleasant person to be around
 - You lack joy in your life
- What's the alternative? You pay
- You absorb the cost
 - When you want to lash out - you don't
 - When you want to hurt them - you refrain
 - When you want to gossip and slander and grumble about them to others ... you hold your tongue
 - As you refuse to go there ... stops you becoming self-righteous, angry and bitter
 - And bit by bit as you absorb the pain ... absorb the loss ... you are able to forgive
- You say ... "that'll hurt!"
 - "That's a whole lot of pain you're asking me to swallow there"
- Yes ... you do suffer when you forgive like this
 - As you absorb the pain and refrain from making them pay ... you do suffer
 - Why? Because you're paying the debt instead of making them pay the debt

- But as you forgive, your heart softens instead of hardens and you are able to be free from the bitterness and angst that would otherwise ensnare your soul

3. Practice of Forgiveness

- Easy right? Taken some good notes > reckon you can do it?
 - Not easy is it!
 - What do you? How do you put this into practice?
- In this passage Jesus gives us two resources to help us
 - He gives us a method and he gives us a motive
- First is a method or a process
- Very practical
- In v15-17 Jesus is talking to the disciples and
 - "If your brother sins against you ...
 - Here he's talking about situations where a person from church hurts you, wrongs you, slanders you, offends you ... whatever
- What do you do?
 - You go to him and point out his fault
 - If your relationship with a person is damaged or fractured because of something they've done to you ...
 - The way to deal with that is to go to them and let them know and resolve it
- The way not to deal with it is to
 - Grumble, snipe and gossip and whinge about it
 - Rather go and speak to the person about what they have done to offend and upset you
- The whole purpose of this is not to tell them and make them feel guilty
 - That's just making yourself feel better by making them pay
- The whole purpose is to "*win your brother over*" > to reconcile ... to restore the relationship
- **Illustration – Restorative Practices**
- Interesting here at PSPS they are putting this into practice
- Implementing a process with the students called '*Restorative Practice*'

- Restorative Practices aim to help teachers, students and parents to build, maintain and restore relationships that have been damaged
 - It does this by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the offender and forgiveness by the victim
- Students were given little business cards with questions
 - *What do you think when you found out this happened?*
 - *How have you or others been hurt?*
 - *What do you think needs to happen to make things right?*
- It's the same idea
 - Jesus is saying ... go to the person and share how they have hurt you so you can reconcile and restore the relationship
- He goes on to explain what to do if he is unwilling to listen and reconcile
 - Don't have time to go into that
 - Point is ... here's a process that Jesus gives us to help us reconcile with others
- It's not rocket surgery! Just ...
 - Identifying with them
 - Going to them in grace and love
 - Explaining how what they did or said has hurt you and fractured your relationship
 - Not to tell them off and make yourself feel better ... but to restore and reconcile

Motive

- Second thing / ultimate thing that's going to help us be people who are willing to reconcile and forgive is ... Jesus gives us a motive
- Motive that comes from the compassion and forgiveness of the king
- In v27 we see how despite the massive debt the servant owed the king ... the king's heart went out to the man and he cancelled his debt and sent him away
- It's interesting when you look at that phrase 'took pity' it is used almost **exclusively** for Jesus' feelings towards those he is seeking to heal and comfort

- **Constantly** we see through the gospels how Jesus heart went out for people > crowds, leper, blind, grieving widow
- Of course the king in the parable points to Jesus as the ultimate king who's heart goes out to his people
- If we're going to identify with the person who has hurt us and is against us ... our heart must go out to them
- How? It's so hard! How can we do it?
- We remember how on the cross Jesus identified with us
 - Remember how on the cross Jesus showed compassion to us
 - How on the cross Jesus heart went out for those who were against him when he said "*Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*" (Luke 23:34)
 - How on the cross he paid the **\$18bn** debt you and I have no hope of paying
- Remember how on the cross he absorbed the cost for you
 - But it wasn't money he paid
 - It was separation from his Father as he experienced the full wrath of God for all the times we have lied, bullied, hurt, slandered, retaliated, cheated and hated
 - **He absorbed that cost** ... so your debt could be cancelled
- You know when that servant is choking his fellow servant ... when he should be humble and generous and forgiving in the same way the king was towards him ... but instead he's acting like judge and king
- Only way you and I are not going to be like that servant and holding onto grudges and refuse to forgive others and acting like judge and king over others...
 - Is to see afresh the **grace of the** judge and king who has forgiven you
- When you do ... and you see how
 - he cancelled your debt
 - he identified with you on the cross
- When you get that ... when you see that ... it will free you to unlock the gates of forgiveness towards others
- **Illustration: Corrie ten Boom**

- Corrie ten Boom lived in Netherlands during WWII
 - Famous for protecting and smuggling Jews out of the country and away from SS
 - The Germans arrested her entire family where they were eventually sent to the notorious Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany
 - On arrival at Ravensbrück the women were marched to the processing centre for new arrivals
 - There they had to pile all of their belongings in the centre of the room and then strip naked and also add their clothes to the pile
 - Naked they had to walk under bright lights and past the scrutiny of a dozen guards towards the shower room
 - Corrie's sister Betsy died at Ravensbrück ... but miraculously one day due a clerical error ... Corrie was released from prison

- Two years later in 1947, she was living in Germany as a teacher ...
 - "It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former SS man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing centre at Ravensbrück."
 - "He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there – the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsy's pain blanched face"
 - "He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. *"How grateful I am for your message Fräulein", he said "To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!"*
 - "His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often on the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side."
 - "Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him."
 - "For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then."

- For Corrie ten Boom ... forgiveness came at a great cost
 - She had to put aside her natural response to hate him, avenge him
 - She had to bear the pain of forgiveness herself
- But she was able to do so as she remembered
 - Jesus cancelled his debt and hers
 - On the cross Jesus identified with him and with her

- So her heart was able to go out to him just as Jesus heart had gone out to her

- Forgiveness and reconciliation isn't easy > it will mean absorbing the pain the hurt you've experienced to do so
 - But it's the only way you will be able to free yourself from the snare of anger, bitterness and hurt that you will carry around in your heart if you wont

- But when you look to the cross ...
 - And see the size of the debt that the king has cancelled for you
 - And see how his heart has gone out to you
- It frees us to do the same with others

PRAY