

Mark 10:35-45; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

“The Hard Work of Reconciliation”

“Do us a favor, Lord! Let us sit on Your right and on Your left in Your glory!”

“Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Our focus for today is the idea of becoming *great* by being a servant... The work of forgiveness is a difficult process, an ongoing process!

This Jesus knew what I had suffered.

He understood.

He cared. Because He had gone through it all Himself.

– Rev. John Perkins

“For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your heavenly Father will not forgive your transgressions.”

I could sense that God was working a deep inner healing in me that went back a long way... God was healing all those wounds that had kept me from loving whites.

With God in your life, forgiveness works into us a greater heart than the one that used to beat in our chests!

Isn't it audacious to come to the throne of grace if we haven't been gracious to the people in our lives? How can we approach a God of mercy if we ourselves have hearts full of bitterness or anger?

Rarely will we achieve forgiveness because it's *required* or it's our *duty*.

Unforgiveness is a set of delayed emotions like resentment, bitterness, hatred, hostility, anger, and fear.

“Without any question, forgiveness is the key relational issue in the Bible.”
– David Seamands

If we want to receive forgiveness without giving forgiveness, we're asking God to violate His own moral nature.

Many of you have already moved to the place where you want to forgive. It is your intention to forgive.

When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has some thing against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

- **Forgiveness** is something you choose to do alone.
- **Reconciliation** is done together, with the offender.

When you tell God you're willing to forgive, that's like telling the Holy Spirit to come on in and remodel your life!

We regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know Him no longer in that way. – 2 Corinthians 5:16

As agents of God's grace:

5:11 – “We try to persuade others...”

5:14 – “The love of Christ urges us on...”

If you are in Christ, you are a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

It's hard work to obey God with hearts that are self-centered to begin with, and made even harder when being wronged tempts us to believe we have “good reason” to be unforgiving.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. – 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Each time you forgive and move toward the one who hurt you, you are moving closer to the heart of God.

INVITATION

1. To what action is the Holy Spirit appealing you to make so that you are more at peace with Him?
2. Is there some confession of sin that you are called to pray?
3. Have you experienced the new heart as a gift from God: a heart that desires what He wants for you?