

Forgiveness and Other Difficult Things...

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Date: 24 February 2013

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture reading this morning comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 17. Please follow along in your bulletin. He said to his disciples, It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come.

It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard.

If your brother sins, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day and returns to you seven times saying, I repent, forgive him.

The apostle said to the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, Be uprooted and be planted in the sea, and it would obey you.

Which of you, having a slave, plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, Come immediately and sit down to eat. But will he not say to him, Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself, and serve me while I eat and drink.

[1 : 2 7] And afterward, you may eat and drink. He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too.

When you do all the things which are commanded you, say, We are unworthy slaves. We have done only that which we ought to have done.

This is God's word. How you guys doing? Wow, that was the worst one ever. How you guys doing?

Okay. Wow. So, if you're here for the first time, my name is Tobin. I'm one of the pastors here at Watermark.

Two quick announcements, very quickly, just to dispel any rumors. Yes, my wife is gone. She went to visit her family in California this weekend because someone came in and said to me, Christina must be gone.

[2 : 3 0] And I'm like, well, why? And she goes, well, look at how the kids are dressed. You must have dressed them. Yes, I was responsible for dressing my kids today. So, thank you very much.

It's great having a lot of moms. Also, the other, just to spell anything, you came in and there was a rock on your chair. We talked about hell last week.

So, these rocks aren't for you to throw at me when you dislike something I say, okay? So, they're not ammunition or things like that, but they're just things. We'll use those later on, keep a hold of those, and we're going to talk.

Okay, we're on a journey. We use that word a lot. We're on a journey through the book of Luke. We've been doing Luke for two years now.

I figured that we'll finish Luke in next fall. We picked the Gospels because we figured if we looked at Jesus, we couldn't go wrong, right? We picked the Gospels because we looked at Jesus' life, and we realized that in his story is our story.

[3 : 31] Our story fits into his story, and everything that we need to hear and know is in his life. And so, we've been going through Luke for two years now, off and on with other things added in there.

And so, we're on that journey with Luke. We also talk about we're on a journey in life. And one of the things you need to know about journeying through life is that the journey in life is all about relationships.

Relationships. It's all about relationships as we go on this journey. There's two main ones. I kind of think of them because I'm not an engineer. I'm studying medicine, but I kind of think of them as vertically and horizontally.

And first, we have that vertical relationship in our world, and that's with the Lord, with God. And that we all go on this journey with God. And it's important to remember that when we go on this journey with God, that we should be growing in a couple different ways.

We should be growing in our awareness of God's holiness. And we should be growing in our awareness of my flesh, my sinfulness. Those things should always be growing in our life.

[4 : 41] It's why we study the Word of God. It's why we are in church. It's why we're in a community group because people help us understand about God's holiness. God's Word helps us to understand about God's holiness.

And being in community helps us to understand about our brokenness, our fallenness. And whenever one of those isn't happening, we misplace grace.

We don't understand grace. We don't understand the cross. And so we live lives that are bifurcated or not what God meant for them to be. Also, in this journey, we have a horizontal component.

And that component is with people, relationships, community, your spouse, anybody that you're with there. And as you go on that journey, there's two things we can never forget also.

It's really important. And on that journey, we always got to be growing in our understanding that every person is made in the image of God. Every person is made in the image of God.

[5 : 38] Every person has God's fingerprint on them. Every person has God's watermark on them. That's why we call this church a watermark because we feel like God has called us to help bring out that watermark.

And so everybody is made in the image of God, even your worst enemy. And the second thing you need to remember in that journey as individuals with other people in community is that we're all broken and sinful.

We're all broken and sinful. I mean, if you ever catch yourself saying, oh, I can't believe they did that, what you're saying is, I'm not like that. If you ever catch yourself saying, well, I can't believe this happened this way and that really freaked me out, you're saying, I'm not broken and I'm not sinful or I'm not as broken as they are or I'm not as sinful as they are.

And if you do that, you'll never live life. You'll never enjoy the journey that God meant for you to enjoy. Never. We're on a journey in Luke, Luke 17.

It's important to remember in Luke 17 that as Jesus is teaching, he's going to Jerusalem, he's going to the cross. He's going to die a terrible, terrible death.

[6 : 58] It's about one week away from this passage. So we're going to get to it next fall, but in chronological time it's one week away. And as he's going on this journey, he's pulling his disciples aside and he wants to talk to them about what it means to be a follower of Christ.

What does it look like to follow Christ? He's going to talk about four things in this passage. He's going to talk about accountability. He's going to talk about forgiveness. He's going to talk about walking in faith.

And most importantly, he's going to talk about service. All four of these things he's going to say, if you are my follower, this is what you do. This is who you are.

It's not something special that you do. It's not something that you get a high five for after you score the touchdown. It's just something that you do. It's who you are. Accountability, forgiveness, faith, service.

Those are just things that we do as Christ followers. And so as we look at this passage, I want to bring out a couple of those things. And I want to talk about the why, the how, and the what, and what it means to walk with God on this journey and doing those four things.

[8 : 08] things. Now, for some of you, if you're like me, I grew up in an amazing church in the States, but the focus is always on myself. So I read a passage and I said, what does this mean for me?

How does this apply this to my life? How does this affect me? Probably you're very similar to that. But the scripture is very different.

The Bible says that all of these passages are meant not just for you, but for the family of God. That all these passages are meant for us to be lived out in community. They're written to a church, they're written to a community, and you live these things out in community, and sometimes we forget that, and when we forget that, we don't enjoy the journey like God meant for us to enjoy.

I'm going to try something today for the first time ever. We'll probably never try it again because it will probably, but we'll see. And what I want to do is I want to lead us in some reflective prayer time. I'm going to look at those four points very briefly, and then I want to lead us into some confessional prayer time.

I've had some prayers written out. Today's a day of prayer. We felt like as a staff, and so I'm going to do that, and we'll see how that works and what goes with that as God calls us to walk with Him, and what does it mean to walk with Him?

[9 : 23] You ready? Okay, so Luke 17, verses 1 and 2, and He said to His disciples, it is inevitable that it will happen.

It has to happen. Don't be surprised when it happens. It's going to happen that stumbling blocks come, but woe to Him through whom they come. It would be better for Him if a millstone were hung around His neck and He were thrown into the sea than that He would cause one of these little ones, one of these Christians, one of these Christ followers, one of my children to fall away from the face.

Jesus says here that sin coming into our community because we're living as a community is inevitable. It's going to happen. When we talk about sin, I'm not talking about personality differences.

I'm not talking about cultural differences. I'm not talking about preferences, but I'm talking about sin. The word in Greek here is a very interesting word.

It's skandalon. It's the word we get scandal from. It's this idea in Greek of this bird trap. The bird trap is like this and this pole with the bait on it is the skandalon.

[10 : 31] It's the thing that attracts people to the trap. When the bird hits that trap, it hits the scandal. The trap closes and kills the bird. This is the imagery that Jesus is using and He's saying these things are going to happen.

He's going to say sometimes you and I we're going to forget our obligations to Him. Sometimes we're going to forget these four things and when these things we forget them, sin happens and His warning to us as a church and as individuals is woe to you.

It's a very strong word in the Greek. It means don't do it. It means it would be better for you to be killed by men than to cause somebody to fall away from the faith.

It would be better for you to be destroyed. In Jesus' day they actually killed criminals by hanging a millstone around their neck. A millstone was a big piece of two stones and you put weed in it and you grind them up and there'd be a little hole in the center like a coin that we have and you'd rip it around and sometimes they would take criminals and tie a millstone around His neck and they would throw Him into the water.

And Jesus says to us it would be better for that to happen to us than for us to cause somebody to stray away from the faith. It would be better for that to happen to us than if somebody were to look at their life and say well that's what being a Christian is like.

[11 : 59] I don't want to have anything to do with that type of Christianity. And so the question we have to ask ourselves today is how are we doing?

Is our faith beautiful? beautiful? Is Jesus beautiful? When people look at us do they see Christ and all His glory and do they see grace and mercy?

Do they see beauty? Or are we a stumbling block? Are we a scandal? Are we a scandal on?

Are we something that's causing people to run away from Christianity not to take it seriously? Are we doing harm to the people of God instead of good?

As an employee what would it look like for you to be a scandal to those around you? What would it look like for you as you went into your office this Monday to turn people away from Christ?

[13 : 08] What would it look like to live a life in such a way that if people found out that you were going to church they would never want anything to do with church? As an employer what would it look like to live every day in a scandal?

What would it look like to cheat your employees? What would it look like so that you are so toxic that your employees don't want to go to church or at least your church?

As a teacher do your students see Christ in you? When you walk into the classroom do they see Jesus in your words and in your grace and in your actions or are they overwhelmed and they think well they must be thinking about something else?

As a parent is our faith beautiful to our children? When our children look at our lives do they see Christ and beauty and love and mercy and grace?

or do they see hypocrisy? Hypocrisy just last night I'm sitting at the table in our dinner we're talking I'm trying to make conversation with everybody and so we just set the ground rules in our house we have a couple words we don't say we don't say shut up and we don't say stupid now our kids think that those are curse words and so we just don't say those at all and there's a lot of different reasons behind it you know there's just there are things and so last night at the dinner table Kip looks at me and he says how come when I say stupid I get in trouble but when you say stupid nothing happens?

[14 : 59] it's tough man right? wow I'm like well my first reaction is well you know I grew up where stupid wasn't a bad word that's what I want to say I've said that a couple times I've said you know stupid is something that your mom feels strongly about but it's something that I don't know I'm kind of on the fence about that's worse right?

sometimes I just say I don't know but what I should say is you're right and I'm sorry because I've sinned against you and I've sinned against our house when our kids I mean dude it's tough being a pastor right?

you guys hear the talk and then you leave I have to think about this for months and months and then my God just hitting me over the head showing me inconsistencies in my words in my life sometimes 10 year olds are the best x-rays to inconsistencies as a pastor what do I preach?

do I preach something funny and sexy and good and nice to hear or do I preach the gospel? do I preach a message that is a scandal on to people and turns them away from the beauty and wonder and mercy and love of Christ?

are my words up here consistent with my words when I go back home and act with my kids and my family? or are my words a scandal to them?

[16 : 43] Christ says be careful you don't want to cause little ones followers of Christ to fall away from the faith by our actions I want to lead us in some prayer time let's pray Father Father before you I just repent we repent of our selfishness and our sin Father I pray for the fathers in this household I pray for those of us who are selfish I pray for those of us who are passive I pray for those of us who just think about ourselves and don't engage our wife and our kids when we go home Lord we need you help us not to be a stumbling block to our kids help us not to be a stumbling block to our wife and to our neighbors as they see us interact

Father help us to know what it means to walk with you Lord as singles we we repent of stumbling blocks and of being stumbling blocks in our world do we cause people to stumble with our words do we cause people to stumble with our bodies and how we dress and how we flaunt them just to get a little attraction do we cause people to stumble and to walk away with our lifestyles Father as parents we confess our inconsistency in what we say and how we act with our kids please please we beg you please don't allow our kids to be trapped by this to fall away from the gospel to not love your son like we do but to hate him Lord we realize even if we give them a perfect education and a perfect life and they get it to the perfect school and the perfect jobs that they could lose everything perfectly for eternity because they didn't see you lived out in our lives consistently

Father's wives we confess how we are not Father how we have not allowed our husbands to be the spiritual leaders in our families and in our lives Father we confess and we pray for the sarcasm and the arrogance that sometimes we show to our husbands our spouses in front of our children Father we beg your forgiveness and we pray that our kids don't see that and we pray that their marriage doesn't end up being just like our marriage Lord we need you Lord come to us now and show us how we could cause people to fall show us how we could cause people to fall out of love with you and your son Jesus Christ the inconsistencies in our life Lord we need you to show us these things we need you amen be on your guard if your brother sins rebuke him not guard your own life but guard your heart because that sin is going to come in there and that sin is going to do something and if your brother sins rebuke him and if he repents forgive him and if he sins against you seven times a day and returns to you seven times a day saying I repent forgive him

Christ is teaching us he's teaching the church he's teaching his disciples that as the family of God it's really important for us to watch our hearts as we're sinned against he's telling us that we need to come against brothers and sisters and to admonish them to correct him to show them the errors of their way and when I'm talking about sin I'm not when I'm not talking about just a simple okay he dropped his gum but we're talking about things that separate relationships because on the journey the relationship is a key and so anything that comes in there and separates that relationship between us and God and between us and each other God says that we need to come and we need to go before those brothers and show them that sin the goal is not to shame them the goal is to restore them the goal is to keep the family healthy the goal is to bring the family together the goal is forgiveness Jesus says as a church and as disciples on this journey that we we must rebuke sin even when we don't want to we must forgive even when we don't want to you know often when something happens and I watch

I look at somebody's actions and for me I just kind of think through okay something's happening there has what they've done affected the relationship between me and them has what they've done affected the relationship between them and God has what they've done affecting them has what they've done affected how Christ is seen in the community around them has what they've done a habitual habit that they keep doing over and over and over and Jesus says that those things are true that our responsibility is to go before our brother and to rebuke him to correct him to show him what's going on and to show him that he shouldn't do that and the moment the moment that he asked for forgiveness that we're to forgive him forgiveness is hard isn't it

[22 : 48] I mean I think it's it's it's really really hard it's like the Bible says that when somebody wrongs you that you incur a debt there's a debt taken out and the only way I can think of it I've been thinking about this for a long time it's like we're this okay you can tell what my family does we're this big bowl of ice cream or this tub of ice cream and every time somebody wrongs you this scoop comes in and it digs some of you out and that wrong comes again and they dig you out and the question you have to ask yourself is what do you replace that digged out ice cream with I mean if you're like me maybe you replace it with anger maybe you replace it with frustration maybe you replace it with sadness because whenever sin hits us like that bowl of ice cream being scooped out it takes something away from us it might take something away from our character it might take something away from us emotionally it might take something away from us in our comfort it might destroy our ego it might be a financial burden that's taken away and Jesus says in this passage as the children of God when we're wronged by brothers that we are to eat the debt there's always a debt there's always something that needs to be paid last week our car was waiting for the kids to be picked up at school and a guy pushing a cart older guy lost control and the cart slammed into the side of our car and left this huge dent well fortunately our car is a 16 year old minivan so it's okay but this huge dent and all these things and he was so panicked what do I do

I have this debt I have to pay these things and I said to him don't worry about it we'll take care of it did the debt go away I mean for him it did but the debt still had to be taken care of right it still had to be dealt with it still had to be fixed and Jesus says as we go in community as we're on a journey with relationships that when someone wrongs you and you've come to them and they've and that word seven times seven he's not saying come back okay forgive me okay come back hey I messed up again please forgive me no there's a passage where Peter goes hey if someone forgives us three times which was a symbol of perfection should we they wrong us three times should we forgive them three times and what Peter's expecting Jesus to say is wow you're great you're perfect because the rabbi said if you forgive somebody three times you're perfect and Jesus says no he says seven times 70 and what he's saying there is that's like the perfect number that's what passage what Jesus is saying in his passage is if your brother comes and he sends the perfect sin against you what would that be get you fired kill your children destroy your marriage lose something of great value

Jesus says even if that brother comes and he does the perfect sin against you you're to eat the debt you're to take care of it you're to forgive him how's that sound now it's impossible to do if we forget that we're all made in the image of God if we forget that we're all made in the image of God we're gonna say instead of my sister who sinned we're gonna say that sinner and instead of if we're all made in the image of God if we forget that we're gonna say my brother who cheated me we're gonna say cheater isn't that interesting I'm just asking talking about my own wife when somebody else lies or cheats to me they lied and cheat to me but when I do it it's complicated you don't know what's going on in my life right now

I grew up and that wasn't a swear word and Jesus says watch your hearts because we're always gonna have this propensity to explain away our sin and he says if you do it you're you're lost you're lost if we forget that we're all broken and sinful we can't do it either because we're gonna call names we're gonna say I wouldn't do that I would never do that but what scripture says here is that forgiveness is to all of us that we're to give everyone that we're forgiven to the debt actually it's the idea of surrendering what we owe or what's owed to us surrendering what's owed to us how we doing how you doing with the debt I'm sure most of us have these ice cream buckets that are pretty much scooped out right now what are we filling them up with the passage says that Jesus wants us to fill it up with him that he wants us to fill it up with him forgiving debt is always painful it's always costly it always costs somebody something debt just does not go away except for in the

US government and economy but everywhere else in God's realm debt has to be paid the question is how are you gonna pay it and who's gonna pay it let's pray Father we Father we confess that we are often hard hearted people with a desire to get even to be right to be justified not to forgive to keep a score to rejoice when something bad happens to that person and say well I told you so they'll get what they deserve but your word says something so different that you you've asked us to forgive you've asked us to eat in the debt Father would you show us your forgiveness to us would you show us what it meant for you to eat our debt would you show us what it meant for us to experience your mercy and your grace Father's husbands

[29 : 46] I'm sure that many of us have become embittered angry leery of our wives because they don't do what we need them to do or when we want it done or they do things in our household so much better than we can do them Father would you help us to forgive those wrongs help us to repent of our selfishness help us to lead our families by first going to our wives and apologizing to them because we haven't been the servant leaders that they've called us to be that you've called us to be help us to say I'm wrong help us to say please forgive me as wise if any of us have anger or hurt resentment towards our husbands if any of us have built walls that have not long been broached for a long time Father I pray for the wise in here that they would take the debt you would help them to take that understand what that means Father I pray that they would stop trying to make their husbands pay for it because he deserves it Father I pray that you would help them to be servant helpers that you've called them to be help them to say

I was wrong help them to say forgive me Father show us your forgiveness to us right now before all of us with so many hurts so many offenses against us our parents our bosses our workmates our schoolmates our best friends our boyfriends our girlfriends people we really loved and cared for and scooped out our life and hurt us in ways that we could never think about Father help us to take that debt remind us that they were made in your image remind us that we're all broken that we're all broken in the need of you of your mercy and your grace Lord please just show us this forgiveness we know it's costly we know that we can't do it on your own but your word says that you will do it for us and through us Lord I pray for every one of us in this sanctuary right now as we meet with you that you would show us what it means to be forgiving people but more importantly Lord as a community on a journey and relationships is everything

Father show us what it means that you forgave us Father we need you and we thank you and we pray all these things in your son Jesus name immediately after hearing this the apostle said to the Lord increase our faith and the Lord said if you had faith the size of a mustard seed you would say to the mulberry tree be rooted and be planted in the sea and it would obey you and what Jesus is saying is you don't need any more faith Jesus is saying you already have all the faith that you need that when you came to me it took faith and that faith that you had when you came to me that's all you need the question is are you going to appropriate that faith are you going to trust in it are you going to live in it Jesus is saying with just a little faith the people of God can do amazing things amazing things and so what he's telling his disciples here is you don't need more faith you need to use the faith that I've already given you don't try to manufacture more faith it won't work out what happens is that we need to have a simple faith in an amazing

God and trust him to walk with us verse 7 through 10 Jesus goes on and he tells this story that everybody would have understood because in Jesus day everyone had slaves did you know that it's not slaves like we think but even the poorest people usually had one slave slavery was usually incurred by debt financial debt and you had two choices when you made a financial debt either you went to prison or you became somebody's servant often people gave their kids to people as servants or slaves because they couldn't feed their kids my grandparents tell me of growing up in a depression and where their kids had they had a big family and they had to be pushed off to the aunts and uncles because they couldn't afford to feed their family during the depression and so in Jesus day when he told this story what he's talking about within this community the how the why and the what it all centers around this idea of service to serve everybody would have understood the illustration everybody would have had a slave and everybody in reading verses 7 through 9 would have said well of course they would do those things first that's what slaves do slaves do what they're supposed to do they do all those things first there's no expectation as a master my slaves are always going to do what I expect them to do that's just what's said and then verse 10

Jesus turns the tables and he goes okay now in reality God's the master and you're the servant how are you going to handle that because everything that Jesus has asked his disciples to do in verses 1 through 6 watch out for sin rebuke your brother forgive walk in faith serve those aren't special things those are just things the people of God do does that make sense it'd be like you doing your taxes this week and you fill out your tax form to the government or to whatever country you're for and you write out your check and you mail it in and after a week you get really angry and I say why are you angry and you go well they didn't send me a thank you note you don't expect a thank you note when you turn your taxes in it's just something we do and Jesus is saying here that all of these things are just things that we do reprove correcting forgiving being careful of sin loving our neighbors serving all of these things are just things that we do as a family of God it's nothing special but it's what we do

[35 : 52] Jesus is trying to tell his disciples here that if you and I if they understood the gospel if we understood all that Christ has done for us if we understood the massive debt that God forgave for us at the cross if we understood that Christ came from heaven as the master and he became a servant and he served us if we understood that on the cross his last words in John now my wife got mad at me last week because I yelled out Eli Eli Lama Sabachthani and I said oh that's too loud too loud okay his last words in John were just tell us die just tell us die it means it's finished it's completed every debt is done I've paid every debt in your life I'm continuing to pay the debts that you do everything just tell us die it's done if we understood that Jesus on the cross through his blood took everything what he's saying here in this passage is then serving would be easy then forgiving would be easy then being careful of sin and not wanting to lead people astray would be easy then walking in a community on a journey would be easy because it's what

God has called us to do the four big ones temptation accountability forgiveness faith service Jesus is walking to the cross and he wants us to realize as his people that this is what it looks like to walk with the people of God how we doing does that make sense yes no what do we learn from this about Christ we learn that Christ makes our life possible we learn that he fixes everything that he cancels the debt he brings us to the father he enables us to walk with the father through faith through his spirit and he brings us together in a community that's to serve him to act counter-culturally to do amazing things in his kingdom and the question is do we want that do we trust him or do we want to be God do we want to take our debt do we want to sin do we want to cause people to go astray father we just thank you for this day we thank you for this passage which is in some ways a very interesting and hard passage as we look at our lives lord I pray for those of us in here who struggle with temptations and sin lord as a community we come together help us to walk with each other father help us to be involved in each other's lives more than just sunday help us to think the best of each other help us to realize that we are all made in your image and that we are all broken and we need amazing amounts of grace and mercy lord help us to be a community that doesn't shoot our broken brothers and sisters but be a community that brings them together for the purpose of restoring and healing father teach us this week what it means to forgive more importantly lord we just pray that we would understand more what your son has done for us in forgiving us i know lord that there are some people in here who have no idea what i just said they could care less and they're ready to go eat and lord i pray for them now that whoever brought them why ever they're here we know that there's no mistake that people are here that you would speak to them pray that your spirit would open their eyes and their hearts to their need for you i pray that they would see your son jesus is beautiful and true and has come to fix their life in the brokenness relationships lord i pray that they would have the courage to say well if god is real god please just make yourself known to me i want to see what this is all about and lord for the rest of us who struggle with forgiveness and mercy and sin we are so thankful for you because the journey isn't finished here we're still taking step by step in relationships the journey is finished in heaven so lord as we're on this journey we just cry out

and say that we need you we need your hand in our lives we need your spirit to change us and to fulfill us and to make us what you've called us to be and lord i pray for this church your church to think of the church that jesus was growing up that this is a picture of but two thousand years later after he went to the cross and rose from the grave lord help us as your people not to forget these things help us not to forget what it means to be your children help us to love the people around us and to point them to something wonderful and beautiful your son jesus lord we need you we pray all these things in his holy name amen let's go to what love the organisation that it Oh same as you oh