**Small Group Sermon Study Guide:**

When God’s Story Becomes Your Story: (3) You Forgive

**1/22/12 A.M.** Luke 17:1-10

1) *Luke 16:14:“The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.”*

 *Luke 17:1: “Jesus said to his disciples”*

Both Jesus and the Pharisees claim to be the true custodians of God’s story. In Matthew 5, Jesus claims that his “brand” of righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the Pharisees. Jesus way of life displays the Father’s heart better than any other way of life.

 **Read Lk 15:25-32.** How does the older brother respond when invited to join the party?

 *Lk 15:29 “I’ve been slaving for you….Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could*

 *celebrate with my friends”*

How does the older brother characterize his relationship with his father?

What does he expect from the work that he does for his father? (See quote sheet)

2) *“And seven times comes back to you and says, “I repent,’ forgive him.*

Dallas Willard says (see quote sheet “Unity of Spiritual Orientation for full quote),

“There are few one-way streets in the kingdom: for example, God forgives me but I do not forgive, Jesus confesses his friendship to me before the heavenly company but I do not own him before those less than glorious ones around me…”

Evaluate Willard’s claim and Anne LaMott’s observation. (see quote sheet).

What does Matthew 18:21-35 teach us about the size of our debt towards God?

3) *Increase our faith…if you have faith the grain of a mustard seed*

For Christian’s faith’s object is Jesus our Lord, who works mightily within us.

 Read Miroslav Volf’s quote on the back. *Where do we get power to forgive?*

4) *Suppose one of* ***you***…*Would he thank the servant*

This “debtor servant” is doing ordinary work to pay off a debt he owes to this master. Jesus says “forgiving others” is an ordinary duty for servants that belong to him.

 How might cultivating a humble, servant heart help us approach the task of forgiveness?

 Does Jesus actually thank his servants? (see Luke 12:37b)

5) “*We are unworthy servants: we have only done our duty.”*

 Some Calvinist Christian’s go overboard in calling themselves “unworthyservants” .

 (See example from Scott Hoezee on quote sheet)

 Is that what Jesus wants? What is Jesus trying to prevent?

 *Quote Sheet*

***Resentment***

I went around saying for a long time that I am not one of the Christians who is heavily into forgiveness---that I am one of the other kind. But even though it was funny, and actually true, it started to be too painful to stay this way…In fact, not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and waiting for the rat to die.

--Anne Lamott, qtd in, *Everybody’s Normal Until You Get To Know Them* by John Ortberg, 166

***Why Doesn’t the Elder Brother Go Into the Party***

Why doesn’t the elder brother go in? He himself gives the reason: *“Because I’ve never disobeyed you.”* The elder brother is not losing the father’s love in spite of his goodness, but because of his goodness. It is not his sins that create the barrier between him and his father, it’s the pride he has in his moral record; it’s not his wrongdoing but his righteousness that is keeping him from sharing in the feast. (Obedience was the elder brothers) way to get control. His unspoken demand is, “I have never disobeyed you! Now you *have* to things in my life the way I want them to be done.”

***--***Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God,* 36-37

***The Unity of Spiritual Orientation***

To understand Jesus’ teachings, we must realize that deep in our orientations of our spirit we cannot have one posture toward God and a different one towards other people. We are a whole being, and our true character pervades everything we do. We cannot, for example, love God and hate human beings (I John 4:20)….

Life in the kingdom of God is not something we *do,* like investing in the stock market or learning Spanish, that allows us to reserve dominion over our own life and *use* the kingdom for our purposes. We have to surrender the inmost reality of the self to God ... We cannot “use” it while holding our inmost self back from it. There are few one-way streets in the kingdom: for example, God forgives me but I do not forgive, Jesus confesses his friendship to me before the heavenly company but I do not own him before those less than glorious ones around me.

--Dallas Willard, ***The Divine Conspiracy,*** 232-233

***Christ in Me: Power to Forgive***

“It is no longer I who live, but is Christ who lives in me” wrote the apostle Paul (Galatians 2:20). Echoing those words, we can say, “It is not I who forgive, but Christ who forgives through me. Of course, it is still we who do all the things that forgivers do—we desire to forgive, we say the words “I forgive you”, we give up resentment, we don’t press charges, we don’t consider the offender guilty anymore…and yet “behind” our doing all of this is Christ, who lives in us. In Luther’s words, he is “the basis, the cause, the source” of our forgiving.

--Miroslav Volf, ***Free of Charge,*** 201

***You can Imagine what we made of vice***

 In his novel *“The Blood of the Lamb”,* author Peter DeVries skewered his Calvinist upbringing in many ways. In one particular scene he shows a group of devout men talking with the pastor in a living room of someone’s house. The men seem to be having a grim contest to see who can outdo whom in belittling their own spiritual works. No matter what act of service got mentioned, it was immediately decried as no more than “a filthy rag” that could not but stink to the highest heaven. The narrator then comments, “*This being what we thought of virtue, you can imagine what we made of vice.”*

--Scott Hoezee, Center for Excellence in Preaching website, post 9/27/2010, p2