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Long Beach Alliance Church • June 29, 2014 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.

~Luke 7:47 (ESV)

1) *The Limits Of Grace*

- A) Jesus often told intentionally designed stories in order to provide sophisticated answers to complex questions. Most questions do not have simple “black-and-white” answers, making Jesus Christ’s use of parables (stories with intent) both clever and engaging.
- B) Jesus’ favorite audience for His parables were His disciples. The disciples wanted “the good life” of Christ. However, they often asked frustrated or confused questions about the life they were experiencing, as opposed to the one they expected (sounds like most of us, yes?!).
- C) After hearing Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness (Matthew 18:15-20), Peter asks just how much forgiveness is required before it is legitimate to hold a grudge or withhold relationship (18:21-22).
- D) Rabbinical tradition taught that forgiving a person three times for the same offence was sufficient. Peter’s “seven times offer,” (18:21) doubles rabbinical teaching, an absurd “over-the-top” type of suggestion.
- E) Jesus’ response of “seventy times seven” (18:22) is so outrageous, it renders Peter speechless (a feat), and probably dumbfounded. As Christ often did, he develops his simplistic answer with a “story of intent” (parable) to illustrate a more sophisticated set of values.
- F) Like all parables, this parable about an “unforgiving servant” is meant to reveal something about the Kingdom of Heaven (18:23). The good life is revealed in the character and significance of the Kingdom of God.

2) **A Forgiving King**

- A) The King has come to collect a loan of an extraordinary amount of money to a servant (Matthew 18:23-24). A talent was the largest measure (a weight) in the Greek world. Further, “ten thousand” is the largest numeral for which Greek accommodate. The largest weight and the largest number, like using a phrase “bajillions” or “gazillions.”
- B) For specificity though, In the time of Christ, a “denarius” (cf. 18:28) was equal to payment for a day’s labor. A talent was just over 66 pounds of silver. Ten thousand talents was equal to 60 million denarii (300 tons of silver), or just under 165,000 years of salary!
- C) Equivalently, if a person made \$75,000/year, the amount which the King is owed in the parable is around \$12.32 Billion dollars. The debt which the servant owes the King is beyond comprehension. The servant has no solution, it is impossible for him to pay the debt.
- D) As was the custom of the day with a debt of such great magnitude, the King could order every asset of the servant liquidated, including his wife and children (18:25), in order for payment to be resolved. In the ancient world, there was no “bankruptcy,” there was only slavery.
- E) The servant begs for the lives of his wife and children, promising repayment, despite how ludicrous his debt is with the King (18:26).
- F) One would expect the King to respond with swift and unfeeling justice, but here is the twist in the story! The King feels and acts in a compassionate manner toward his servant (18:27), forgiving him of the astronomical debt, freeing him from both debt and slavery instantly!

3) **The Economy Of The Kingdom Of God**

- A) The same servant, while on his way back to his home, finds someone who owes him a debt (about 100 days wages, a significant amount by most measures) who is unable to repay (18:28). Of course, you would expect him to respond with graciousness, but he does not! He beats his servant, and has him jailed until the family can pay his debt (18:29-30).
- B) When the original King hears how the servant he forgave has treated another in such a harsh and merciless manner, he brings him back to his court and judges him for his wicked and merciless heart (18:31-33).
- C) The servant is enslaved (18:34) for violating the God’s Kingdom principle of rejecting God’s grace, proven by his own unchanged heart (18:35).