

Mk. 11:25-26 “Forgiving and Being Forgiven”

For the Children: Have you ever tried to pray for someone with whom you are really angry? Have you ever tried to pray to God when you are really angry with another person? It’s not easy! Prayer comes out of faith, and faith shows mercy. Wanting to get revenge takes us in the opposite direction. When we show mercy, we are acting like our Father in heaven. When we want to harm someone, because they hurt or upset us, we are acting more like the devil! When you love the way someone else does things, you will usually try to copy their way. If we love God’s mercy to us, we will try to copy it by showing mercy to others. **Questions:** Can it be loving and merciful to keep reminding someone about their sins? How has God shown you mercy? Does God save us because we are forgiving?

Introduction:

First Point: Our Forgiveness and God’s Forgiveness

- A Vital Connection: God’s forgiveness of us is, in some way, connected to our forgiveness of others. See also Mt. 6:12,14; Mt. 18:21f.
- Facing the Future with Forgiveness: This teaching fits with what the Lord was teaching about praying in faith: a lack of mercy may indicate a lack of faith; it also fits with what was happening at the time: the disciples would need to forgive the Jewish leaders for killing their Master, so they could minister to them with the Gospel.
- No Merit in Our Mercy: Our acts of forgiveness are not good enough to gain God’s favour. That is not the connection between our forgiveness and God’s. Rather, our acts of mercy are a fruit of knowing Christ and His mercy. They evidence whether we really know Him, and are thus forgiven. That is the point of the Parable of the Unmerciful Slave (Mt. 18:23f. If we truly love the merciful King, we will not despise mercy – His example – when we have opportunity to show it.
- Unconditional Forgiveness: However, forgiveness has 2 aspects. One is the “sending away” (the word for “forgive” here) of ungodly anger, bitterness, hatred and a desire for revenge. Instead, we must love (seek the welfare of) those who offend us, even if they have not repented. This aspect is “free” or “unconditional.” It can even be applied to enemies. See Mt. 5:25,39, 40, 41,44,45, hence the text uses words like “whenever,” “anything,” “anyone” – without specifying that the other must first repent .
- Conditional Forgiveness: The other aspect *is* conditional upon repentance. The Lord calls us to admonish, reprove and rebuke those who have sinned against Him, in order to help them repent (Lk. 17:3; Mt. 3:8; Rom. 15:14; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:15; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2). He insists on church discipline when someone refuses to repent (Mt. 18; 1 Cor. 5). Then the offence cannot be let go, for the welfare of the sinner and the church.

Second Point: Our Forgiveness and Our Prayers

- As Important as Worship: Forgiveness is also crucial for worship. Without it, our faith is undermined – as opposed to the undoubting faith of vss. 22-24. In Mt. 5:23-24, seeking reconciliation with a brother who has something against you is therefore put on a similar level of priority as participating in formal worship – as it is here, by the words, “*Whenever* you stand praying...forgive!”
- Necessary for Effective Prayer: The implication is that forgiveness is necessary for effective prayer. We see a similar point regarding the prayers of husband and wife in 1 Pet. 3:7. A bad relationship “hinders” prayer. Prayer, as an expression of faith, is for those who are reconciled to God and therefore to others. This is important in congregational life as well.

Conclusion: