

Sermon – How to live in Christian Community

Welcome:

- Happy New Year to Mission!
- Every year this is a great opportunity to review your prior year and look forward to changes in the upcoming year ahead.
- Did anyone do anything exciting for New Years? I know I didn't....in bed by 10 pm.
- Let's jump into our message for today.
- **Please stand for the reading of God's word from Matthew 18:1-5.**

The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."

Prayer:

- **Pray God would soften the hearts of everyone in the room**
- **Pray that God would use his word to penetrate the hearts and minds of his people at Mission Church**
- **Pray that the holy spirit would speak through me and give a message honoring Jesus**

Intro:

- This morning we are going to evaluating Jesus' message to the disciples in Matthew 18 on "How to live in Christian community."
- There are four teachings in Matthew 18 to the Christ-Follower on how to live and interact with other people who seek to obey and live-out the teachings of Jesus found in scripture.
- My prayer is that we could glean from the message something that will allow us to develop deeper friendships & relationships this year in the church.
- Having a tight community & social network is a design of God to help the Christian flourish.
- It allows us too;
 - o Take the message of the Gospel into our communities, city, and state and across the globe.
 - o combat the attacks of our adversary Satan
 - o Encourages us in our weakest moments
 - o Strengthens us to the end in our walk with Jesus
- It matters who & where we spend the majority of our time.
- Scripture would tell us this in 1 Corin. 15:33

1 Corinthians 15:33

“Don’t be deceived, bad company corrupts good character.”

Transition: Matthew 18: 1-5 teaches us about the characteristic of Humility. Humility is required for the Christian Community Life.

- Disciples ask an arrogant question “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

STORY - Reminds me of coaching my son’s 5th grade boys basketball team.

- All the kids want to be the “greatest” and ask me constantly “Coach, who is the best player on the team?”, “Coach, can I play the point guard?”
- The question itself is one of insecurity and selfishness
- The disciples reveal their heart’s desire here which was to be the BEST/ THE GREATEST
- Jesus brings up a little child and teaches them about HUMILITY.
- What does he mean “become like a little child”?
 - A child cannot offer you anything
 - A child is dependent
 - A child is not providing any monetary value

First Humility is Essential for Salvation.

- Jesus is showing us that humility is essential for our salvation

James 4:10 “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

- You need to be humble to receive the message of the Gospel.
- To be open and receptive you have to admit you cannot save yourself and need a savior.

SHARE GOSPEL HERE IN ITS FULLNESS

A Christ-follower must be characterized by humility

Matthew 18:1-5

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

Becoming like a child is to walk in humility.

- Jesus is teaching the disciples that to live together is to walk humbly with each other.
- Jesus is teaching us to be humble like a little child.
- We are to take a low position and not continually be opportunistic seeking the “angle” to profiteer of someone or to buddy up to someone that can give us something

We are to be like children in that we care for those around us that can offer us nothing.

- Doesn't this describe the best kind of friend? The one who needs nothing from you but just wants to hangout and have fun?

STORY – Pastor Jesse first coming to Mission and calling me to say catch-up and I am like “What do you want from me?”

- My first reaction was wrong.
- Calling to check-in with no agenda was powerful and impactful.
- We can do that for someone in our community. Call and check-in.
- Humility is a key requirement of a Christian living in community

Transition: Another parable that Jesus gives here in Matthew 18 is on Forgiveness with the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. This parable is going to teach us a lesson about forgiveness. Let's look at the parable.

TOPIC #2 - FORGIVENESS

Matthew 18: 21-35

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.^[1] He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’” “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. **Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’** In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. **“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”**

- The story tells us of a servant who’s debts were cancelled but yet did not show the same compassion he was shown to his debtor.
- The modern cultural term would be to “Pay it forward”. This man did not pay anything forward and did he not forgive his debtor as he had been forgiven.

A person who has been forgiven is required to demonstrate forgiveness to others

- To live in a God-honoring Christian Community means we are forgiving each other when a brother or sister sins against us

- Jesus is showing us and his disciples that we are to be a forgiving people.
- The common ancient near east principle often enacted during this time was called “**LEX TALIONIS**” which is Latin for “**the law of retaliation**”.
 - First seen in the Code of Hammurabi. See picture below.



- This code was presented in the society for all to see. Its “eye for an eye” principle.
- I will stick it you back with equal force or more that you wronged me by.
- Jesus hits this straight on and is teaching his disciples and us today TO FORGIVE is the way.
- What a counter cultural narrative....someone wrongs you...forgive them....70x7 Jesus says!

Matthew 18: Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” ²² Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”-

- Is there someone that you need to forgive?
- How can we do this?
 - By understanding the forgiveness we have been offered through Jesus Christ
- Jesus is throwing out “eye for an eye”/ Law of Retaliation and substituting it for a community that humbly forgives each other when they have been wronged.

A man who does not show forgiveness has not received forgiveness

- You don’t give what you don’t know.
- If you haven’t received the forgiveness how can you give to out to others?

- What greater community to be around than a bunch of humble and forgiven people!
- We have an example of this being lived out in ACTS 2,
- The disciples have had time to mature and grow and in ACTS 2 they display a community living under this new principle of forgiveness.

ACTS 2:45-47

The Fellowship of the Believers

“⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Conclusion: As we start a New Year 2023, let us mature in our faith and walk together humbly forgiving each other as the time arises.

Why, because;

It is the humble person that forgives and the forgiving person who is humble.

- There is a word used often in scripture which is “Repent” or “Repentance”.
- It is used to convey;

A change in mind that leads to a change in action

- Contrary to popular culture REPENTANCE is a good thing
- It requires humility and the receiving of forgiveness
- God is calling us to have 1st a change in mind that leads to a change of action in following his teachings outlined in the bible.

LET US CLOSE IN PRAYER