

The title for today's message is: **Changed People**

Peter said: **Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I would like to begin with a short story, it's a story about a father-in-law, who now lives with his son, daughter-in-law, and her mother.

Now, from the moment the father-in-law came to live with them, the tension and uneasiness in the house became very apparent.

The woman thought to herself, "I have enough to do around here, with out caring for her husband's father. Besides, he doesn't even like me.

He has always felt that, I stole his son from him. And now that his wife has died, he feels even more alone, and blames me for everything.

And besides, why do I have to have him in my home anyway. So, as you can see, the situation there wasn't good at all.

She felt her unhappiness was all his fault, he was ill tempered and was suffering with gout in his foot.

He was always sitting in the kitchen next to the stove. And he would open the oven door, so he could rest his bad foot on it.

And as he sat there, he would begin complaining about what his daughter-in-law did, and how she would prepare the food for the family.

He would do this until she couldn't stand it anymore, and she would loose her temper, and get very angry at him.

Now, beside his outward actions, there was a lot of thoughts in his mind that weren't being shared with anyone, like he did when his wife was alive.

And as for his daughter-in-law, she was full of resentment for not only having to put up with her father-in-law, but also for having to take care of him.

She claimed to be a high spirited Christian, but she would lose her temper and explode very easily.

Then, there would be those days when neither one would talk to each other nor even look at each other.

But when they did calm down, yet another explosion would occur and the same pattern would be repeated again and again.

One day the daughter-in-law couldn't take it any more, so she went to her pastor to talk. She felt guilty, ashamed and hurt, that she was unforgiving.

She just felt lousy. She told her pastor the whole story, and said "I just can't control myself, so what can I do?".

The pastor asked, "What does he like to eat the most?" Well, with a surprised look on her face, she said "Fudge."

He said, the next time you get into another shouting match, stop, walk away and make him some fudge.

Well, she certainly had a problem with that, in fact, she thought the pastor just didn't know what he was talking about. *Make him some fudge, right!*

Now, for some reason everything went great, that is, for the next couple of days. But by third day the daughter-in-law was busy fixing supper, it had been a busy day, and she was running a little behind.

That day the demands on her time were heavy, and her father-in-law didn't help, it seemed to be demanding more than ever.

As the daughter-in-law was preparing supper, the father-in-law once again pulled up a chair, opened the oven door and propped up his foot. Ready for a fight.

At one point, she was carrying some hot water from the stove to the counter, and as she did she accidentally spilt a little bit on his bad foot.

And of course it set off another yelling match. The daughter-in-law started to feel her temper getting ready to explode as she stood there.

But this time she remembered what the pastor had told her, so she let her father-in-law yell, and carry on, as she said a prayer. She then turned around and began to make fudge.

Sometime later after supper, She took the pan of fudge, which she had hidden, and cut her father-in-law a piece.

She brought it to him, and when he saw the fudge, he stared at it, and couldn't believe his eyes.

Finally, as a tear fell on the plate, he turned to her and said, "Let's talk, we need to resolve our problem once and for all.

He said the reason I'm so grumpy is because I miss my wife." The daughter-in-law came over to him, embraced him and said.

"Yes, I want to talk with you, too. I know it isn't your fault that you have to live here.

The point to this story is, anytime forgiveness is present, lives do change. And in this case, forgiveness was present through that action of preparing the fudge.

In our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus makes just that point. In his answer to Peter's question, and in the parable which follows.

Jesus speaks about forgiveness as a way of changing lives. Now, Let us begin by looking at Peter's statement.

Peter asked: **"Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"**

Now to get the full impact of this statement, we need to understand the Hebrew mind.

Peter asked how many times he should forgive someone their sin, and he gave a low number of 7 times.

I say a low number because according to Jewish law at the time a man only need's to forgive someone 3 times.

Look, Peter thought he was being generous, very generous in fact by saying he was willing to forgive someone 7 times for their sin against him.

But Jesus takes Peters offer and multiplies it eleven times, He says no not seven times but seventy-seven times.

Here Jesus was making a point by saying one cannot count, or keep track of, how many times one forgives.

Jesus is saying that forgiveness does not stop with numbers, but that its a way of life, its all about love, mercy, and recollection.

When forgiveness happens, it changes people, it brings them into a relationship with God and one another.

Look, the whole idea of gracious forgiveness, which is forgiving without any reward, is difficult for us, because we do want revenge.

That's right, we want revenge, not forgiveness, and Jesus drives this home by telling the parable of the "Unforgiving Servant."

If Jesus were to tell this parable today, He might use the example of a banker. That is a banker calling in loans.

However in our text, Jesus used the example of a master calling in the loans that his servants owed him.

Jesus said: **When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.**

Now ten thousand talents would be about 10 million dollars today. No one knows how this servant built such a large debt, but we do know his master wanted it paid back

Since there was no way for the servant to pay back his debt he falls on his knees saying; **Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.**

Have Patience! he knew he could never repay his master. But surprisingly, the master forgives him of all his debt. That's right all of it.

Here, Jesus is saying, this is the way it is in our relationship with God. We're so indebted to Him because of our sins, we cannot ever repay Him.

So, we too like the servant, ask God for time, foolishly thinking we can appease Him, by somehow working off our debt.

But God is wise, He knows about our helpless situation, and He knows we cannot repay our debt to Him.

So, He too forgives our debt by sending His only Son to pay our debt for us. By sending His Son to the cross on Calvary.

Its at this point in history, that God builds a bridge, He places the cross to end the separation between Himself, and us.

Yet what happens when the bridge of forgiveness falls? Which is something that happens in our text for today.

Once the servant was forgiven of the debt he owed his master, he left. And while he was walking along, he saw another servant who owed him a hundred denarii.

Now the servant seized his fellow servant who owed him and even began to choke him all the while yelling at him to pay what he owed him.

Then just as he did earlier, the fellow servant: **fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'**

But he wasn't generous like his master was with him, instead of forgiving the debt, he threw his fellow servant into jail until he could payoff his debt.

Now, this wasn't going to happen without someone noticing. In fact it was noticed by several of his fellow servants.

His fellow servants who saw this happen went to the master telling him how bad the servant who had his debt forgiven earlier, treated his fellow servant.

Not surprisingly the master was outraged and called for the servant that he had forgiven the debt.

The master was so furious he throws the servant into jail until he could pay his debt. Now, the exaggerated point Jesus is making here is this:

If God can forgive our lifetime of sins, and wrongs, then we can forgive one who sins against us.

But many times we take God's forgiveness for granted, leaving us unable to forgive our neighbors.

Or another way of looking at it, we're arrogant enough, to believe that what God does for us, really doesn't matter.

Because if only given enough time, we can prove ourselves to God. Therefore, we arrogantly live life judging others by our own standards.

Jesus wants us to live a life of hospitality, a life of forgiveness, and a life of love and kindness.

I think the following word's sums up Jesus' point: It goes like this: Let me shed a little light On someone's path I pray. I'd like to bring them Happiness today.

It may be just a phone call, A bright smile, or kindness. Or a long neglected letter, To show you really care.

I hope I can bring happiness In what I say, or do. Make life a little nicer, for someone else today.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.