

**God's Principles; Human Standards:  
September 13, 2020**

So. Janet has two sisters...  
Who are twins.  
And two brothers...  
Who are not.

One brother is named Dan. **[1 Manchester]**  
Dan lives in Manchester England...  
With his wife Natasha...  
And their daughter...  
Thalia.

From our home...  
In Castle Rock... Colorado...  
Manchester England...  
Is approximately... exactly...  
4546 miles away.

That's quite a distance.

Let's pretend for one moment...  
That Janet's brother Dan...  
And his family...  
Decided to visit us...  
Here in Colorado.

So... they packed their bags...  
Made all the necessary arrangements...  
To leave town.  
Bought tickets.  
Made their way to the airport.  
Flew 4546 miles...  
To end up...  
At DIA...

And after all that...  
Gave us a call...  
And said... good news...  
We are here.  
It was a long journey.  
But we at the airport...  
And ready...  
To be picked up.

The airport is 42 miles...  
From our home.

What if our reply was...  
Oh... I'm sorry.  
I know your life...

Has been hard...  
The last couple days.

But we are busy.  
And it's not convenient.  
For us right now...  
To drop everything...  
And pick you up.

It's not a good time.  
The airport is...  
So far from our home.

We really can't get you...  
Right now.

Cheerio.

---

That would be rude... right?  
I mean... after they had traveled...  
All that distance...  
Just to see us...  
And to strengthen...  
Our relationships...  
And to spend some time.

And speaking of spending...  
After they had used...  
So many of their personal resources...

To say... we couldn't go...  
1/100th of the distance...  
They traveled...

Is just wrong.

It's a sign of a selfish heart.  
It's a sign of an acute lack...  
Of awareness...  
Of self...  
And others.

And most of all...  
If this scenario were real...  
It's also a metaphorical slap...  
In the face of God.

Because God has clearly asked us...  
To be about the work...  
Of maintaining...  
Restoring...  
And healing...  
Relationships with each other.

---

So I've been thinking about this text. **[2 The Keys]**

And when Peter... came to Jesus...

Don't you think...

He was looking...

For a gold star.

Like he was brown-nosing...

Just a bit...

Sucking up...

Wanting to hear Jesus say...

Good job Peter...

Good boy.

You really get this.

---

Peter says... hey Jesus...

I've been thinking...

About everything.... you have been teaching us.

And I think... it applies...

To forgiving each other.

So... how many times...

Should I forgive?

And then... Peter picks out...

A big number to him...

He chooses an impressive...

Number of times...

That he should forgive...

Other people...

According to everything...

He has learned from this world.

And what he's experienced...

And what he has seen...

He says... Should I forgive...

As many as...

Seven times?

That's a lot.

In Peter's mind.

Because Peter is trying to apply...

His worldly standards...

To a godly principle.

So in his heart and mind...

This number seven...

Seems generous.

And good.

And Christlike.

---

But you know what happens next... **[3 77]**  
Jesus blows that number...  
Out of the water.

He chooses a number...  
That Peter couldn't even imagine.

It's ridiculous.  
It's extreme.  
It's hard to understand.

Jesus says...  
Not seven times.  
But you should forgive...  
Seventy seven times.

And I'm sure...  
That Peter was completely dumbfounded.

---

It's what happens...  
When we try to define...  
God's principles...  
In a way...  
That we can...  
Fully embrace.

You know what I mean... **[4 Small God]**  
When we make the ideas...  
Of Jesus... fit into the smallness...  
Of our own minds...  
And lives...

So that we are comfortable.  
So that we can accomplish...  
What he has commanded...

So that we feel good...  
About who we are...  
And what we have done.

And at the end of the day...  
We can pat ourselves on the back...  
And say... I am a good person.

So just like Peter...  
We apply worldly standards...  
To godly principles.

---

For example...

We all know...  
That Jesus told us...  
To love our enemies.

Which we will gladly do...  
As long as our enemies...  
Basically agree with us.  
And don't challenge us...  
To terribly much.

We can love our enemies...  
As long as deep down inside...  
They know... they are wrong...  
And we are right.

---

Jesus calls us...  
To turn the other cheek...  
Which we will gladly do...  
One time... maybe twice...  
But then we say...  
I'm sorry... I can't do that again...  
I've run out of cheeks.

And so we refuse to turn...  
Like Jesus has asked us to do...  
And instead... we engage...  
In the battle...  
To justify ourselves.

---

Jesus calls us...  
To feed the hungry...  
Cloth the naked...  
Visit the sick...  
Care for those...  
Who are in prison.

Which we will gladly do.  
As long as it doesn't...  
Inconvenience...  
The flow...  
Of our daily life.

As long as it doesn't really...  
Cost us... any time... or effort...  
Or personal resources.

---

See... what we do...  
Is we reset...  
The commands of Christ...  
In order to have those...  
Challenging thoughts and commands...

More conveniently mesh...  
With the standards of the world...  
With the standards of our lives.

We bring the holiness of God...

Down to earth.... to make it attainable.

---

But what if attaining...  
And fulfilling these commands...  
Is not the real purpose...

What if Jesus isn't asking us...  
To actually fulfill....  
Every single detail...  
Of this new Law...

But instead...  
What if Jesus is asking us... **[5 Change]**  
To change the way we think...  
About God and each other.

What if Jesus is asking us...  
To change our hearts.

So that we desire...  
To fulfill his commands...  
Even if we can't do it...  
We desire it... and we try...

So that we genuinely want...  
To change this world.  
To change our relationships.  
To change... ourselves....

---

What if we are supposed to be challenged...  
In our faith.

To push ourselves beyond...  
Our own comfort...  
Beyond our self-preservation....

Beyond our own simple little lives...  
Where everything is nice and neat...  
Where everything has a place...  
And everything is in its place.

And we can handle everything...  
ALL BY OURSELVES.

What if God is asking us...  
To think...  
To hope...  
To believe...  
And even to act...  
Beyond ourselves.

---

Now... please understand...  
I'm not saying...

That we can do it.  
That we can be perfect.  
As though perfection...  
And fulfillment of the law...  
Is something obtainable...  
If we just discipline ourselves...  
Enough.

Clearly it's not.

But I am saying.  
Maybe it's time...  
For a little realistic accounting...

Accounting of who we are...  
Not who we think we are...  
But who we really are...

In comparison...  
To the grace and mercy...  
We have received...

In comparison...  
To the commands of Christ...

And in comparison...  
To the needs of the people...  
Around us.

---

Back when our youngest daughter... **[6 New Math]**  
Was in high school...  
She would sit...  
At the kitchen table...  
Right after school...  
To do her homework.

She was self-motivated...  
It was impressive.

When I would get home from work...  
She would ask me...  
To help...  
With any questions she had...  
About the homework.

When it came to math...  
I mean... come on...  
That was my area...  
When I first went to college...  
I was planning on being a math teacher...

But she would show me...  
How they were doing math...

And it was vastly different...  
Than what I had learned.  
I couldn't understand...  
Why they would have the students do...  
All these strange unnecessary steps...  
To get the answer.

When clearly... there was a more efficient way.

But I couldn't teach her my way...  
Because they had to show their work.

Which meant... because I didn't understand...  
How they were doing the new math...  
I couldn't help her.

---

It's kind of what Jesus is asking us to do. **[7 Jesus Math]**  
He wants us to look...  
At the problem of forgiveness...  
Like it's NEW MATH.

So that we can understand...  
Why we should be willing...  
To forgive each other...  
An infinite number of times.

Let's get to it.  
Let's do some math!  
Yahoo.

A denarius...  
Was a coin...  
Which Jesus said...  
In a different parable...  
Was equal to...  
One day's work.

I think he said that...  
To make it simple...  
So people could understand.

---

Anyway... let's assume... **[8 Denarius 1]**  
That a denarius is equal to...  
One day's pay.

100 denarii... therefore... **[8 Denarius 2]**  
Equals 100 days...  
Of work.

Makes sense so far... right?

Let's pretend for the sake of math...  
That the average wage... **[8 Denarius 3]**

In the United States is \$25 per hour.

And most people work 8 hours per day...  
That means the average daily salary...  
Would be \$200 per day.

A denarius... was a day's wage.  
So. If you have 100 denarii...  
That means... the servant in the story... **[8 Denarius 4]**  
Owed the other servant...  
\$200 times 100 days...  
\$20,000.

That's a pretty good amount of money.

---

If someone owed me...  
\$20,000...  
Seizing them...  
By the throat...  
Giving them a little shake...  
And say... pay up buddy.

Right now. Right this very minute...  
You pay me everything you owe...  
Or else... I am going to have your thrown...  
Into prison...

Seems like a reasonable response.

Or more likely...  
In our modern world...  
We would call...  
A lawyer...  
And sue them...  
For every cent they owed.

---

However... in this parable...  
Jesus is NOT trying to teach us...  
How to get our money back.

He's trying get our attention...  
By being EXTREME.

So to understand...  
What Jesus is saying...  
We need to calculate...  
How much...  
The first person...  
The first servant...  
Owed the King.

So. Stick with me.  
We just said...

One denarius...  
Was worth \$200. **[9 Talent 1]**

But there were 6,000 denarii...  
In just one talent.  
It was the amount of money...  
You could earn...  
Over the course of 20 years.

And I'm not talking about...  
What you could sock away...  
In some kind of retirement account.  
An IRA or a 401K...

A talent is equal to...  
Your entire earning...  
For 20 years.

So... just one talent... **[9 Talent 2]**  
Would be worth...  
\$200 times... 6,000...  
Which is a total of...  
\$1,200,000  
1.2 MILLION DOLLARS!

---

That's a cubic truckload of money...  
But the guy in the story...  
Doesn't owe the king...  
Just one talent...

This guy owed...  
10,000 talents.

So... back to the math... **[9 Talent 3]**  
That's 1.2 Million dollars...  
Times 10,000...  
Which is...  
\$12,000,000,000.  
TWELVE BILLION DOLLARS!!!

That's how much...  
This servant owed the King.  
A ridiculous unattainable amount.

His debt was so deep. **[10 too deep]**  
His debt was so deep...  
That there was absolutely no hope.  
Of the servant being able...  
To pay back.  
What he owed.

No hope.

And yet...  
When he cried out for mercy.  
Out of the generosity...  
That is the essential nature...  
Of the king.

The servant was forgiven.  
His debt was gone.  
Everything.

He was free.

---

So. That's the math.

And now the truth.  
When I hear this story...  
When I work through the math...  
I understand one thing.

I am that servant.

Not the one who owes...  
One of you... a fellow servant...  
A decent somewhat significant debt.  
Which I can certainly repay.  
If you will give me a chance.

No.  
I'm the first servant.  
I'm the one who has no hope.  
Of paying the King...

I have made mistakes...  
And choices...  
And decisions...  
Over the course of my life...

That have not only caused...  
Hurt and pain...  
For other people.

But I have dishonored...  
The King.

---

I have not listened...  
To what God wants me to do.

I have not tried...  
My very best...  
Or very consistently...  
To apply the commands of Christ...  
To my own life.

I have not done...

Very well... in loving God...  
With all my heart and soul and mind and strength.

I have not done...  
Very well... at loving my neighbors...  
As much as I love myself.

---

And I have no excuses.  
I have no recourse to justify myself.  
I have no hope.

My debt is too deep.  
It's overwhelming.

---

So. All I can do.  
And if you're with me.  
All you can do.

Is to take that enormous debt...  
To admit that it's...  
What we owe...

It's the truth...  
About who we are...  
About what we have done.  
About what we have not done.

And fall on the mercy of God. **[11 Forgive Me]**

And really understand.  
How deep our debt is.

And really understand...  
How far we have fallen short.

And really understand...  
How much it has cost...  
To make us right.

That our freedom...  
Was in fact... not free.

It cost Christ everything.  
It hurt God.  
To set us free.

Doesn't it mean something...  
To you... and to me...  
To know that...

God moved...  
Heaven and earth...

That the Son of God died.  
To forgive our debt.

---

And now.  
In light of God's love...  
And generosity...  
Toward us...

Fellow servants of the King.  
Tell me again...

How many times...  
We should...  
Forgive those...  
Who sin against us?