

## THE PARABLE ABOUT THE GRACE OF JESUS

Matthew 18:10-35

Key Verse: 18:12

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?"

Last Sunday we learned from Jesus about who can enter the kingdom of God. Those who enter the [kingdom of God](#) are humble men like little children. We must learn how to be humble men at the cost of losing hands and feet and precious eyes. In other words, humbleness is the starting point of being a Christian. Those who are not divinely disciplined in the humbleness of our [Lord Jesus Christ](#) are proud men. God exalts a humble man. But proud men never know happiness and joy in their souls. A proud mind is like thorns and thistles to our souls. It is a tool to torture our souls. Today's passage includes three parts. They are all extremely different stories, but there is essential Biblical theology in these three stories.

First, the parable of the lost sheep (10-14). In the former passage Jesus taught them about the basic attitude in being the children of God. In today's passage Jesus teaches us three basic attitudes that we must practice and master. Look at verse 10. It says, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." This verse is not expounded in most commentaries. But the meaning is very clear. God is watching through his angels to see if we look down on a needy person. In this world the political system and industrial management can make one person a scapegoat in order to justify others' evildoings. For example, Mr. Colson was a scapegoat for the Nixon Administration. And Colonel Oliver North was a scapegoat for the secret selling of weapons to Iran, the so-called Iran-Contra Affair. In history, for the sake of their self-righteousness, those who rose to power through hegemony struggle always made a scapegoat. This is the world. But in the kingdom of God no one becomes a scapegoat. Look at verse 12. "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?" Humanly speaking, sacrificing the one who wandered away and saving the ninety-nine seems to be wiser, and to be common sense. So people of the world are happy to forget about the lost one or the victimized scapegoat.

But in the kingdom of God one person is very important. As Pascal said, "One is the total amount of the entire general." To God, the value of one person's life and the value of ninety-nine persons' lives are the same. There is a story about a thrifty widowed woman. Once she lost one coin. Even though she had a bag full of coins in the money belt around her waist and a huge amount of coins in her safe, she didn't mind about so many coins. She looked for one lost coin until she found it. And her joy was indeed great. There was a gray-haired gentle father. He had two sons. One of his sons was born in his old age. As soon as he became nineteen, he claimed all his inheritance, gathered everything that belonged to him, and left to a far off country and squandered it all with prostitutes. He enjoyed sinful pleasure, which

began during his puberty. After five days, all his money, which could have lasted for a lifetime, was gone. After two days, he was so hungry that he ate the pods that pigs were eating. Meanwhile, his father was not able to sleep. He was standing at the door, and he looked far away, peering into the distance^not one day or two days, but until he saw a bag-like person, his second son, coming home. Then the father was overjoyed and began to have a big feast, and all the village people came and ate to their fill. For quite a long time he could not sleep because he missed his second son. But when his second son, who squandered everything he had, came home, he could sleep with his second son. To the father, his second son was everything, even more than everything.

There is a story about a blind beggar in Mark chapter 10. The blind beggar was very sorry that he could not see the face of his mother. He was sorrowful, imagining that even if he married, he would not see his wife's face. There was a march of Jesus' band and the following crowds passing by. But Jesus noticed him calling out to him, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" People stopped him from coming to Jesus. But Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." As soon as the blind man came, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "I want to see!" answered he. Then Jesus healed his blindness and made him whole. In the Bible, Jesus taking care of one person after another is repeated so many times. Let's see about them all^not now, but in the future.

Once early in the morning Jesus went out to a solitary place and prayed to God so that he might listen to God's instruction and be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Right after his prayer, a man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." He had already lost eight fingers, probably. And his two eyes were barely supported by their sockets. The smell of the leper stunk even in a distant area. At that time, lepers were regarded as cursed by God. They lived in a no-man's land because their bodies were dying and falling apart every day. They wanted to die, and at the same time their desire to live in this world was getting stronger. This man somehow got out of the leper's asylum and asked Jesus' mercy, kneeling down on the ground. He could not cry, because he had cried so much that his tears had dried up. But when he saw Jesus, unusually, tears from his soul streamed down endlessly. Jesus saw this one person. Jesus' heart went out to this one person. At the moment, this one person was everything to Jesus. Remember also the stories of Jesus who met lonely people like the Samaritan woman, Nicodemus, and a young and rich Pharisee.

David was a shadow of Jesus in his life of shepherding. His third son, who became the Crown Prince, was as handsome as his father King David. He began to steal people's hearts, standing at the gate of the palace. As a Crown Prince, he hugged and kissed ordinary people who came to make a petition to the king. Then all people came to him, and his popularity spread all over the country. Then he formed a rebellion group and offended his father, sleeping with his father's concubines on the roof. David was a great general. At the moment, General David perceived the situation. He found he must fight with his son Absalom, the Crown Prince, in Jerusalem. He had no confidence to defeat the rebels who were following his son. So David left Jerusalem with his loyal subjects and came to the best place to have a battle between

Absalom's army and his own army. Right before the fighting began, he asked Joab to spare the life of the young man. It was his own son, Absalom. But Joab, the commander-in-chief of David's army, slung three javelins into the heart of Absalom when his head was caught in a tree and the donkey had slipped away. At the news of this from General Ahimaaz, David was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2Sa 18:33) Here, one person Absalom, who had rebelled against his father even though he was Crown Prince, had been defeated. It didn't matter to King David. When he heard that Absalom was dead, he felt he lost everything. Here we feel it is real that one is the total amount of the entire general. At that time, to King David, Absalom was the entire amount of everything. In this age of mass production we learn how tragic it is to sacrifice people one by one for the benefit of mass production. How cruelly people use the individual life of another for their own pleasure and small benefit. They think God does not see this. In addition, in this time of mass production one person's becoming a scapegoat is common sense. But it is totally against God's truth.

We call this the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Saul the Great, who later became St. Paul, was murderous. But the Risen Christ forgave all his sins and chose him as his instrument for the Gentiles. Acts 9:15,16 says, "But the Lord said to Ananias, ^Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'" Later, Paul became a humble man, and he was useful to God. This wretched man had squashed the newly-spreading early Christians. But when our Lord Jesus Christ embraced him with his grace, he became the most famous man in the world, even in the secular world. At that time, only one man took the name Paul. It is because this name means a small and humble one. But now, even non-Christians take Paul's name as their own. Even during the Cold War after World War II, the name Paul spread all over the world. There were so many who were totally unlikely to have the name Paul, but they were named Paul anyway. When our Lord Jesus Christ embraced Paul, he became the most popular person in the world.

Second, the grace of forgiving others (15-20). Look at verse 15. "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." For ordinary men it is common sense that those who did wrong must first come and apologize to be forgiven for their evildoing. But these days, people usually rationalize, claim their own self-righteousness and harden their hearts not to make peace with a friend against whom they have sinned. The other day I received a letter from a far away country. The writer bitterly criticized the high divorce rate in the UBF movement. He said, "UBF has grown as the strongest self-supporting world mission organization. But I cannot commit myself to UBF, because UBF has a high divorce rate." This was strange, because there have been very few divorces in UBF. According to his saying, it sounds like the UBF divorce rate is 45%. I could not forgive him. How could he criticize the organization in which he dedicates his life for the glory of God? I could not forgive him for talking about the decreasing divorce rate of mainland China, not UBF. I almost wrote a letter to him according to the facts. But I just ignored him. More than what he said,

his attitude was unforgivable. I did not forgive him. Then I was not happy. Soon I found his 69-year-old father had divorced his wife. Then I could understand that he was upset about his parents' divorce, and that he was really talking about their divorce. In his confusion, he thought UBF had a high divorce rate.

It is easy for us not to forgive. Instead, it is easy for us to hold a grudge against others over very trivial matters. A young man served his step-mother by cooking and babysitting her own son and daughter, and she also used him as a cleaner. So the young man did not understand what his teacher was talking about during his elementary school days. He began his elementary studies at the age of eighteen in order to take the GED. His step-mother habitually and every day slapped him in the face. One day she slapped him in the face before girl students. The young boy was so mad for the first time and wanted to kill her. But he became a Christian soon after that event through an American missionary's John's Gospel's teaching. He forgave his step-mother's abusing him all during his boyhood and beating him every day except Sunday. After he became a Christian and learned how our Lord Jesus Christ forgave our sins on the cross, shedding his blood, he wanted to forgive his step-mother. The result of his spiritual struggle was not good. The more he wanted to forgive his step-mother, the more he hated his step-mother, and all her mistreatment came across his mind. So he almost became crazy, because the more he wanted to forgive her, the more he hated her event by event. It took ten years of intensive struggle for him to forgive his step-mother. But one day he visited his parents. Surprisingly, the step-mother was completely changed after her daughter became pregnant at the age of seventeen. The step-mother hugged him. To him, her hugging was not acceptable. So he held back instead of hugging her together. The next time he went, she hugged him again. Then he hugged her too, but it was a very stiff hug. Even though he tried to forgive his step-mother for ten years, it was not possible to forgive her. After his step-mother's change and real mother-like hugging, he cried with a loud voice, "Why can't I forgive her?" Then the grace of our Lord Jesus came upon him. He felt Jesus' blood dripping from the cross. His heart was cleansed. And he went and wanted to hug his step-mother. But he was two minutes late. When he arrived, his step-mother had closed her eyes forever. We want to forgive our children, our neighbors, even those who wronged us. But it is not easy. Because of this, unhappiness overwhelms our lives.

As we have studied, King David was a shadow of Jesus. Once General Joab sensed that King David missed his Crown Prince Absalom so much, because Absalom had run away after killing one of his brothers, Amnon. General Joab was a man of tricks. Somehow he manipulated the situation to bring Absalom to the place where King David was. King David was very happy. But he did not allow Absalom to come to him and greet him. King David said, without looking at him, "Go to your place and stay there." We cannot believe that David did this. He could forgive Absalom's murdering his brother, Amnon, but he was not happy to see him face to face. Here we learn that an unforgiving mind ruins our lives. For the solution we need wisdom. Jesus gives wisdom in verses 15-17. Jesus says to visit an offender with some Christian friends many times. Jesus told them that then, if he refuses to make friends with them, treat him like a pagan. But Jesus did not stop there. Look at verse 18. It says, "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,

and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." This verse teaches us that if these two offenders become friends, they can obtain the kingdom of God, and as a result, they can experience fountain-like happiness in their souls. Look at verses 19-20. They say, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." If offenders forgive each other and become one, Jesus promises that he will be with them. What does it mean? "Jesus with them" means that where Jesus is, there is the kingdom of God. When offenders get together by forgiving each other, they experience the joy and peace and unutterable happiness of the kingdom of God because Jesus is with them. Jesus is the kingdom of God itself. If we ignore forgiveness of our offenders and just pretend to be good friends and live together, it is not so unique; this kind of cultural relationship can happen in the kingdom of Satan. We must listen to Jesus and make the maximum degree of effort to forgive others. Those who do not know how to forgive others cannot forgive their own wife's faults or mistakes. Those who do not know how to forgive others cannot forgive even their children's mistakes or bad report cards. Such a person is a living devil. The kingdom of God does not start when we go to heaven. The kingdom of God is right here. We can experience unutterable glory and unutterable happiness when we forgive our offenders.

Third, practice the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (21-35). Like us, the top disciple Peter also felt difficulty in forgiving inferior fellow co-workers. So he came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Forgiving one time is indeed a remarkable achievement. It is like getting a Ph.D., staying up many nights and after many years of study. To Peter, seven times was more than enough. What did Jesus answer? Look at verse 22. It says, "Jesus answered, ^I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'" Usually it takes ten years to forgive one person from our souls. If we have to forgive seventy-seven times, we will have to live an average of 300 years. Forgiveness through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ seems impossible for a sinful man. But it is possible when we receive the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ very personally. Jesus also knew that forgiveness is not a light matter. So he tells his disciples a very interesting allegorical parable. Look at verses 23-25. "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 talents 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." In these verses we learn that forgiving others is as serious as selling our family members. Can you sell your mother to forgive one of your offenders? Can you sell your uncle to forgive one of your offenders? If we do not forgive, we are debtors. Debtors are liable to be put into prison. Look at verses 26-27. "Then 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." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ can cancel a debt of ten thousand talents. Therefore we must try to be close to others by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we can experience the grace of our Lord Jesus' forgiveness and its happiness from above. The servant's master in this allegorical parable forgave ten thousand

talents. Our Lord Jesus Christ never held in his hand one talent. One talent stands for one thousand dollars. Then ten thousand talents means around ten million dollars to poor Jewish people who were victims of great extortion under the Roman Empire. So this man in the parable received abundant cancellation of debt. This man in the parable received the inexpressible grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 28. "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded." The one who received cancellation of ten thousand talents of debt should have remembered the great grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But his heart was still filled with money, money, money mentality. So there was no space for him to forgive one person. How sorry we are even to hear about his ungrateful action to a poor person. That servant whose ten thousand talent debt was canceled went out. He happened to meet one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred denarii, a few dollars. But the one who had been forgiven ten thousand talents did not cancel the one hundred denarii debt. Instead, he grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me," he demanded. The man in this story looks like a wretched man whom we cannot find in this world. But these kind of unthankful people toward the grace of our Lord Jesus are rampant. One servant of God had mercy on a forty-year old Indian man, whose stomach stuck out like a modern Zacchaeus, the tax collector. He had an impossible marriage problem. But the servant of God prayed and prayed. Finally, he could marry an American lady, who is quiet and pretty. Then he ran away from the work of God with no comment. One heavy young man had a marriage problem because he looked like a first-ranking polar bear. No lady wanted to talk with him because of his ugliness. But his shepherd stayed up late at night to help him ride an exercise bike. It took four hours each day for four months. He pretty much shaped up. Soon he got a girlfriend in the secular world. Then the idea popped up in his head, "Well, I must get some money from my shepherd for my wedding expenses." He wanted to get exactly two-hundred thousand dollars. So he sued his shepherd, saying that he hindered his human freedom by forcing him to ride an exercise bike. On the other hand, there are many who know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the beginning of this year, our precious co-worker Dr. Suh's fifteen-year-old only son died. We didn't know how to comfort Dr. Suh or how to participate in his endless pain. And we had a problem. We had just paid money for Elder Lee's ceremony, and we just made a Christmas offering. So I could not ask ordinary members to offer any more. So I, Pastor Ron, asked the Board of Directors to offer \$1,500 each. I knew that they had no money. But they first wrote the check and then they balanced their checking accounts at the bank. Without knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we could not have participated in the pain and sorrow of Dr. Suh.

In the parable the one whose ten thousand talent debt had been canceled grabbed his fellow servant, whose debt was one hundred denarii, and choked him until he looked pale and had breathing difficulties. We cannot please our Lord Jesus Christ if we do such a stingy thing; rather, we make our Lord Jesus sorry that we didn't remember that we received such great grace from our master. His ten thousand talent debt had been canceled. But he forgot God's great grace upon him and abused his fellow servant. How did the master in this

parable see this event? The master was really surprised.

What was the result? Look at verse 34. "In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed." God never forgives this kind of servant and sends him to jail. Here, jail is allegorically hell, where people shout in their torment. To go to hell is not a small matter. One person came to America as a Soviet spy. He was caught and imprisoned for forty years until the Cold War was over. When he entered prison, he was twenty-five. Now he is sixty-five with no wife, no son and no acquaintances. This story seems to be serious. But anybody who is cast into hell will be there eternally. Ten years seems to be okay. Even twenty years seems to be okay. But eternal punishment is indeed unbearable punishment. Therefore, we must remember God's grace and never betray our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 35. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." In this allegorical parable, the one who had had a debt of ten thousand talents is one who received God's grace. But he did not remember the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was his mistake. Because he did not remember our Lord Jesus Christ's grace he was put into hell, where there is no spring sunlight or flowers or budding trees and forests. There is only fire burning during the summertime and ice storms during the wintertime.

Today we thought about how God's grace is limitless. Our Lord is looking for me and for you. He wants to find one lost sheep and give him the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ's grace is unlimited grace. Even if we are unforgivable sinners, when we come to him humbly he forgives us. Finally, we must remember God's grace and put it into practice. Otherwise, we forget about it soon, and later, completely forget about it forever. We Christians are called as those who received the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through his blood on the cross. We Christians were great sinners, but by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ our sins are completely forgiven. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners^of whom I am the worst." Paul shows us that the Christian life is not to forget the wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are very sinful. So we are far away from remembering the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we must remember what great sinners we are. Dr. Charles Kim's mother received baptism. Before receiving baptism the pastor asked her what kind of sinner she was. Then she was mad and said, "I am not a sinner. I never stole. I never lied." In Jesus we are terrible sinners when we don't know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. One who does not remember his personal experience of how he received Jesus' grace is a terrible sinner. Therefore we must grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.