

Scenes from the Life of Christ
Forgiveness
Matthew 18: 15-35
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And now I invite you to remain standing for the reading of God's Word. Matthew chapter 18. We're in the next to last week, the penultimate week in our series on scenes from the Life of Christ.

This is Matthew 18, a moment when Jesus tells his disciples they're going to be a lot of problems in the church and, people will cause each other to stumble, he says in Matthew 18:15-35, God watches over his people when offenses come, but we also have to address them ourselves. God has a responsibility. We do too. Jesus says, and he has a teaching and then Peter questions it and Jesus tells a parable. So that's the structure. Please read along with me in Matthew

¹⁵ "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[c] in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times."

²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.^[b] ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.^[c] ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ So the servant^[d] fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,^[e] and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked

servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,^[1] until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

May the Lord open our hearts to His word. You may be seated.

This is one of those passages that is both public and private. You may remember that in the Middle East for many years has been conflict, and it often involves the taking of hostages. That's, of course, part of the scenario right now. But, some years ago, there were a group of Americans taken hostage in an earlier form of the conflict, and they were held in Lebanon for 5 to 7 years until they were finally released. And, of course, hostages. These are school teachers and diplomats are tools. And you would think they'd be treated well. So the when they're released, all would be maybe forgiven, but not so. They had a miserable life. They were often blindfolded, often kept in solitary confinement, often mocked and humiliated. The man that was there the longest seven and a half years was repeatedly told, today is the day of her release. And then he would get his hopes up and they would, laugh at his disappointment. They said, oh, actually, no, it's not today there's another man in the group, a Catholic priest who was prone to dizziness. And the captors discerned this, and then they took him out and would spin him around and around, and then let him go until he fell over on the ground and couldn't get up for a while. And they just thought that was hilarious. One day, one of the lead captors stood on him for a while, put his boot on his head to demonstrate his supremacy. That's pretty galling, and we'll come back to them at the end of the sermon for a moment. What do you think could should these men forgive their captors who kept them so long they've done nothing wrong and treated them so badly, forbade them even to talk, sometimes for days on end?

Can you relate to it yourself? You were probably never a captive in Lebanon, but you probably remember offenses that occurred to you maybe in a kitchen, maybe in an athletic field, maybe in a workplace that even as I read this passage, you think of because it's the time you were humiliated and wronged, perhaps publicly for a long period of time, or you may be simply a child. We were all children. Everybody who's born as a child. And maybe your parents loved you and did the best they could, but they still hurt you in various ways. It seems almost inevitable that that happens. Or maybe, maybe your parents really didn't care all that much and they wounded you and it was a matter of indifference to them. Or maybe you had a boss who similarly, simply didn't care about your life and wounded you with promises he had no intention to fulfill. He manipulated you. Now the pain we feel is sometimes unrelated to the actual event. The more we expect of somebody, the worse the pain. So if you're in church, it hurts more because you expect to be treated with love or in your family you expect to be treated beautifully and kindly. Or maybe your friends. It's astonishing when they do something hard hearted so a small pain can feel bigger. A secular person, maybe a person who's completely distant from the gospel, might, might hurt you. And you say, well, you know, I can expect that, father, forgive them because they don't know what they're doing. They. They're not taught in

the ways of the Lord. And so I'm going to forgive them. Christians offend each other with remarkable regularity. And so we need this passage.

I'm going to be pretty personal here and there in this sermon. I'm going to tell you that when I was first out of grad school, I pastored a small church. I was a solo pastor of a revitalization work and one of the leaders of the church, like me as a person and kind of like the way I taught, but I did a lot of things that he found defective, and he would call me about every other Monday morning at 7:48, 7:49, 7:50 and let me know what I'd done wrong the previous day. i.e. I would not make the announcements correctly or not send the children out at the right time, or introduce the hymn incorrectly, or pick the wrong hymn, or close my sermon not quite the right way. And he had a litany of the things that I'd done wrong. He was an elder in the church, and he liked me. He was wearing me out on Monday mornings and just waiting for that call, and I knew what he was doing. He was trying to badger me into making this church like the church he had been saved in in Iowa, which is certainly not where he lived. All my stories are true stories, and I always put them in the wrong state, and they turned 40 year olds into 50 year olds and 60 year olds into 30 year olds. They're all true stories and they're all changed. So it wasn't really Iowa, but he I'm not going to tell you what state it was, but he wanted it to be like that church where he grew up. And he wasn't going to stop badgering me until he won the day. Is that a sin or is that just being foolish? Well, this passage is actually talking about sins.

It says if your brother sins against you, not if your brother irritates you, but a real sin, not just hurt feelings. And this is what you do. If your brother sins against you, go just between the two of you and show the fault. Now that that's not the way we do things. Ordinarily, when someone sins against us, we sit, we sulk, we gossip, we try to pretend it didn't happen. We hope our feelings heal themselves somehow. We avoid them. We go the other direction. We do a lot of things. But Jesus says, go, go and go. Don't wait. Go and go alone. Go alone so you can have a conversation. Because maybe you misunderstood what happened and they want to say what they have to say. And if you rebuke somebody in public, their defenses are up and your chances of winning your brother are lower. So go between the two of you. Go and show him his fault. That's a word from the realm of logic. And proof means don't just say something or other, but say this is what happened on this day. I said this, you said this. You made a promise. You said you'd be there. You weren't. And you yelled at me when this happened. And this is these are the facts. And so let's try to work this out. So you go. You go alone, you show the fault, and you go to win your brother. To win your brother means you don't go when you're angry, you're out of control. You go when you're calm, when you've prayed, when you've asked questions like, how can I win my brother?

How can I make my case in a way that they'll be able to hear it? Because the goal is not to tell them they're wrong. The goal is to find unity and to come back to the kind of relationship that you want. Now, when the passage says that you should go, there's an implication for everybody here, and that is when somebody comes to you with a problem that they want to solve.

Or maybe they say, look, we have a problem between us. You must receive them. I'm going to put a verse or two, two verses up on the screen. I'm not going to do it, but our excellent staff is going to put it up there. It's from Proverbs 98:9 and this passage says, *do not reprove a scoffer or he will hate you*. Now who here wants to be a scoffer? Nobody. So don't reprove a scoffer. It's pointless to reprove a scoffer, but we probably all want to be wise men and women. So this is the word reprove a wise man and he will love you. That is to say, when someone comes to you and says, we have a problem, your position should be that of a wise man. And you say, thank you for coming. I love that you're coming to me. Thank you for giving me instruction. Give instruction to wise man. He'll be wiser still. Teach a righteous man. He will increase in learning. So when somebody comes to you, you think to yourself, this is good. This person believes that I'm going to listen to what they have to say, and it's not going to hurt me because you see, if somebody comes to you and they say you're committing a sin and they're wrong, you had a chance to examine yourself.

No harm done there. And if they come to you and you did commit a sin, then praise God you had an opportunity to repent. You can't get hurt when someone comes to you and says, let's put our relationship back together. Now, that doesn't mean it's easy. I told you I'd be personal, so I'm going to I'm going to tell you about one in my life.

So some years ago, someone with a sense of humor, was doing a little bit of roasty talk, and, you know, roast can get pretty sharp and pretty critical. And they made a joke in front of a number of people that was very much at my expense and very much painful. And I said to this person, you know, it's not just that I was hurt by this, but a whole bunch of people said to me, wow, was that out of line.

And so it's not about my feelings only. But, you know, a number of people thought that was really wrong. And the person said to me, oh, no, I was just making a joke. And I said, you ready for this? I said, oh, I'm sorry, I forgot to, I forgot I was talking to a man who never makes any mistakes.

Not supposed to say things like that. It was out of my mouth before I even before I even knew what had happened. I was upset and. And then. Let's see, he. He defended me. And I had accused him falsely. So, we never we've never spoken again. No. Took a little time. Hey, brother, I said something. It was cruel and harsh and unnecessary.

I apologized to you for it, and I'm making a longer story short, and he said, you know, I never should have said what I said, and I'm sorry. And that took about five minutes. And then we talked for an hour and sort of, you know, replenished our friendship and got back to appreciating each other and being coworkers in the kingdom of God.

It was it was hard, but it was good. And that's the way it is. When you talk to somebody about sin, it's hard, but it's good. Some people say, I just can't do it. I can't imagine talking to that person. They're too strong for me. I'll get tongue tied and won't make my case, etc.. Bring a mediator with you, bring someone to help you to make your case or stated and say calm and

someone who loves both parties and will pray for the reconciliation of both parties. People sometimes say I can't do it. When pastors speak to people about a sin someone has suffered. At least you know, what have you done about it? Well, you know, I've ignored them and I sent them a gift and I tried this and that. And when I see them coming, I go to the other side of the street. So in other words, the pastor says you haven't taken the first step yet. The first step is to talk to them. I couldn't do that. Well, who can help you do that is the question. How can we get you to the point where you can talk together so you can find peace in your relationship? Now, ordinarily it works. You go make your case, you go privately, you go to win your brother. You go usually it works. I'm not going to focus on it. But the rest of verses 16 through 20 focus. describe what happens if it doesn't work. If it doesn't work, and it's something public. There are witnesses. It's a significant sin. Then you take witnesses with you to explain what happened and why.

There's a call to repentance. And if they refuse to repent, then eventually, eventually it's rare. But eventually if someone says, yes, I did it, yes, it was a sin. I refuse to repent. Then you say to them, that's not the posture of a believer. Believers repent. By which I mean a believer, someone at some point in their life, maybe they were a child, maybe they were an adult.

Realize that God is holy and they're not, and God is actually offended by our sins. And we say, Lord, forgive me. And that's the first time we repent. But believers are in a habit of repenting of their sins. A believer is often called a disciple, right? But the word disciple, you know how close the word disciple is to the word discipline, right?

So a disciple, the original meaning is someone who learns and someone who's discipline is learning, shall we say, with a little bit of authority or umph. We might sets of technical term a little bit of umph behind it, saying, not only am I discipling you, I'm discipling you with regard to a sin. You're committing. Now some people say, oh, that's not what the church is supposed to be like.

Isn't the church a hospital? Maybe you've heard that it's a it's a valid metaphor. The hospital is a place where people who are sin sick souls can come and be healed. And so why would you be harsh to someone who has a sick soul? Well, the answer is in hospitals we go to get better. We don't go to stay sick.

So if you're a sinner and you go to the church as a hospital, you go to be healed to find your way back to holiness and wholeness. So yes, the church is a hospital, but we want people who want to get better. So it's a place where we repent and turn away from our sin. You have to be ready to receive this when it comes your way.

There was a time when I just told you about a day when I was the butt of a joke in front of a lot of people, and there was a time when I made a joke. Not in front of a lot of people, maybe ten. And it was funny, and everybody laughed really hard. And one person came up to me afterwards and said, you know, so and so was hurt by that.

That was a somebody's expense. A little bit. And I said, you know what? You're right. I'm sorry. I apologize to them. I apologize a person because a funny mouth is a dangerous mouth. You got to keep working on it. And when, when the call came from you all to become your interim pastor. About six months ago. Seven months ago, I guess the invitation came and I started talking to my children about it.

One of my children, who knows me a little too well, said. I hope this is your last hurrah, dad, by which she meant not. I hope you're out of ministry. But she meant. I hope this is the last time you tackle two jobs simultaneously. Because you're not 43 anymore. And maybe you need to calm it down. And I thought to myself, you know, it probably is the last time I'll take on two jobs.

And you know what, honey? Thank you. Thank you for reminding me that I'm older than you are. And I do not have infinite powers. And I'm not 43 anymore, because I forget that sometimes we need to be willing to receive a rebuke. Now Peter hears all this and he says, interesting. I get it that if it doesn't work, we pursue somebody.

Got it. and if it does work, I need to forgive. Somebody got that too. But I have a question. How many times do I have to forgive somebody? And then maybe I'm done forgiving them up to seven times. Now, he proposes that because the teachers of his day, the rabbis said, you have to forgive somebody three times.

And after that, you don't have to forgive them anymore. Peter, aware of the depth of the patience of God and the mercy of Christ, says, I have a feeling three is not enough. And so I'm going to double it and add one. How about seven times? Is that enough? Now Jesus is going to answer that in a minute.

But let me just pause with you and say that he actually even three is a lot. So, one time I was talking about this to a class I was teaching, in, you know, a theology class, and a woman in the class came up to me. She was an older student, and she said, that's interesting that you say forgive as many times as Jesus says 77 times.

But, you know, actually, three is a lot. She said, let me tell you my story. I said, okay, I'll listen. She said, so we have a couple cats and we have neighbors who don't like cats. And you know how cats are. They don't. They don't recognize borders. And so sometimes they wander into our neighbor's yard, and our neighbor has recently started to pick up our cat and lob it back into our yard.

Wow.

And so they thought, well, good fences make good neighbors will put up a fence and our cat won't go through anymore. And the neighbors didn't like the fence from where they sat on their porch patio. It didn't seem even so. One time when this woman and her husband were out of town, they got a chainsaw and evened up the bottom of the fence according to their lights.

So they came back and saw their fence kind of chopped by a chainsaw. That's two right? Cat lobbing one chainsaw to the fence. Two. And then? And then their cat got underneath the fence, the new fence, which had been chopped off, and they killed the cat and lobbed it back into the yard. That's three. And they said, these people claim to be Christians.

They go to the Third Baptist, Presbyterian, Independent Church of Episcopalianism in America. Just to get them all in their and, they claim to be Christians. So that's only three. It's only three. All right. So that's the question. How many times do we forgive? And of course, that can be broken promises from a boss. It can be your husband, your wife, your child, your sibling who does the same manipulative, forgetful, harsh, unkind, something or other that drives you crazy.

Let me just walk you through some options real quick just to establish things. Number one, if your brother sins against you, you called to repent. They forgive and you're done. That's the best case scenario. Number two, a secular person offends you, and you probably have to give them some grace and say they know they're not walking with the Lord yet.

And so I'm going to be merciful to them and forgive them as Christ forgives me and hope they repent one day. And then maybe there will be a secular person who does say, oh, I'm so sorry, and you give thanks for that. And that might be a good step in their life. And then, of course, there's the person who, who doesn't repent, a brother who refuses to repent and, and nothing can win them over.

And that that's, of course, the hardest case. And we do have to make sure I'm going to just say this now as a qualifier, when you forgive somebody, a brother or a friend or a neighbor family member who wrongs you, it does not mean you ignore what happened. We use the phrase forgive and forget. That's actually not a biblical phrase.

There's only one verse in the Bible. It comes kind of close to saying forgive and forget. The really is in the verse that ever says must forgive and forget as if it never happened. So if somebody bars your car and wrecks it, you say, I forgive you and I would like you to fix my car. And you can also say, by the way, this is the second time you borrowed my car and abused it.

And so I'm not going to loan you my car anymore. You can forgive somebody and say, I'm not going to loan you my car anymore, or you can loan somebody money. They don't repay you. A couple times you say, you know what? I forgive you for not repaying me, but I can't make you more loans because it may actually be destructive for you to keep on seeking loans that you're going to abuse.

And, besides, I have to take care of my child's tuition and so forth. So the Bible never says pretend it never happened. It means don't hold a grudge. It means love them and pray the best for them and merciful to them. It doesn't mean you are liable to abuse of every kind. Okay? Still, the question is how many times do I have to forgive?

And Peter says seven. And Jesus says, I tell you, not seven, but 77 times. Now some of you in your Bible translations have not 70, not seven, but 70 times seven, which is 490. And you may

say, well, that's a difference. It's not a difference because you can count the three I forgive you one, two, three. Done. I'll never forgive you again.

You can probably count the seven. I forgive you one time. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. And I'm done with you. But you can't count to 77. You either give up or blow up or change, or something has to happen. You face the issue that this is beyond me, that I can't just power my way through this. And so Jesus tells a parable to help Peter and you and me to learn how to forgive.

And the parable which I read to you a minute ago is pretty straight forward. There's a king who comes to make a settlement, and there is a servant. You probably feel it with a big debt, says 10,000 talents. And I'm going to tell you how much a talent is. So when you think of a talent as an amount as, as a gift thing or capacity, but in the ancient world, the talent was a waste of precious metals, usually silver is usually 75 pounds, so one talent is 75 pounds of silver times 10,000 750,000 pounds, 375 tons of silver.

It's a lot of silver. Hard to picture what that would be. I'll tell it to you a different way. It took 20 years for an ordinary laborer to earn one talent, which means a debt of 10,000 talents is 200,000 years wages, which is billions of dollars, billions and billions of dollars. In other words, the debt of this servant before the king indicates he must have been something like, you know, the treasurer of the country, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Great Britain.

He had access to a lot of money. He abused it horrendously. He could never pay it back. Now you understand that in this parable, in most parables, the King is a God figure or a Christ figure, and the people in the parable are for us. They're people who may or may not be disciples. And so the parable saying, we have a debt before God that is absolutely un payable.

That's the starting point of the parable. So then the King calls this man into account for himself. And he says, well, I'll be I'll pay it back, I promise, I promise. Now the King wants to sell them into slavery in the story. But when he sees the man pleading and begging, maybe even groveling at his feet, he says, you know what?

I'm going to call it a loan, and I'm going to forgive it. You're free to go. And where he goes. And as he's traveling along the way, he sees a fellow servant. In this case, it's going to be Jay who's already up here. And I'm going to use him just for a moment. Now, I don't, you know, about every three months or so, I'm going to do a little demonstration.

And the last couple I was Jesus. But this time I'm the bad guy. I'm the evil, foolish, graceless person. And I just. I just walked out of the presence of the King. I was just forgiven \$10 billion. And I'm walking out, and here's Jay. And Jay owes me 100. And I know you probably don't know 100. There is a denarius is one day's wage a good wage for one day for a laborer, meaning 100 days wages, meaning about four months of salary. Who could be upset if somebody owed you four months of salary? Probably everybody here could be upset about that. And so I'm upset. I see Jay and I said, Jay, you owe me some money. But he. Pay. I'm not actually choking, by the

way. My hands are on his shoulders, so it's not going to hurt, right? You're not hurt. Right? Okay. Good. Yeah. Thank you. Just want to make sure I'm not accused of abusing staff. Your pastors, fellow pastors, pay back what you owe. And Jay says, be patient with me and I'll pay you back everything. Now, can you pay back a debt of 100 days? Wages? Can you do that? Most certainly. And so it's a very sensible plea that he makes. And in fact, if you look at the text, you will notice that the evil choker in this case, that's me said have patiently I'll pay you back everything. And in the text, Jay, the ordinary citizen says the exact same words. Be patient, me, I'll pay you back everything. And the choker has immediately forgotten how much grace he received. He receives all this grace, and he goes to choke his fellow servant who owes him far less. You're done. Thank you so much. By the way, in case you're wondering, he's very willing to do this. You know, he's worked with youth for years, and now, you know anything involving choking and violence with young people, it's all to the good. And, of course, now he takes care of our families. And it was appropriate that he welcomed our catechists because he's responsible for all that. So just to make it clear, we're on good terms. I didn't actually choke him, etc.. But the choker has not taken account of God's grace. Has he? Now, when you read a parable, there are two impulses we have, or any story, any good story.

You have an impulse to identify and to evaluate. You identify whom I like in this story. Well, there are three characters in this story. There's God and the choker and the choke -ee. Now, if you want to identify with some of story, it's not God, it's not the King. That's not us. So who are we in the story?

The choker or the choke--ee? What do you think? You are though the answer. We're the choker. Because we're the people. Jesus telling a parable to his disciples and saying, listen, friends, you've been forgiven all that debt. You've got to act like it. Peter. Peter's question essentially was how many times do I have to forgive? And then I can start choking people? When can I get some vengeance? And Jesus says, the answer is, if you're asking the question, when can I get vengeance? You haven't understood the grace of God, the grace of Christ. You've been forgiven all that debt. You need to forgive others in the same spirit. So that's us. So we identify and we evaluate and we say that's not how we should live. If we've been touched by the mercy of Christ, by the patience of God, then it should show in our lives. And of course, it's hard sometimes because the offense is from somebody who knows us and knows how to get under our skin, or maybe a family member or a friend who keeps on doing the same thing over and over again. And you think, come on, you should have learned it by now. Or maybe, maybe your boss who or your coworker who's made your life miserable the same way over and over again. And we think to ourselves, I want to do some choking here. Now Peter's question again is when can I stop forgiving one three times seven times Jesus's 77 times.

The key description, I think, comes from the King when he hauls the choker back in front of him and he says, you wicked servant! But in the original, these words are way to the forefront, is emphatic is it can possibly be in the text all that debt I forgave you, I know our English

translations say I forgave you all that debt, but in the original it's all that debt I forgave you should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant.

When you think of how much debt we have before God, all that vast debt unpayable, you will be merciful to others. Now that's the story world. But I have to tell you one more very important thing, and that is that Jesus in Matthew 18, it's the end of chapter 18. There's only one more chapter. And then and then we're getting ready to go to the cross by Matthew 21.

We're entering Jerusalem for the final week. By Matthew. In Matthew 20, Jesus says, I'm giving my life as a ransom for many. He's telling him what he's doing. So Matthew 18 is told under the shadow of the cross. That is to say, while in the story, the King forgives all that debt by a word in the story world, it's a word, and the real world all debt is forgiven by the blood of Christ who poured out his life for us on the cross. So in the parable it's, we might say, an easy grace, but in the real world it is an extraordinarily costly grace. The cost is the blood of God's own son. And therefore, when we think of the cost of the grace that gives us forgiveness, we will be generous to others. We'll say, yes, I see in myself the desire to choke.

I see it and I hate it, I see it, and I want to stop because I want to live in light of the gospel of Christ. And people do that. To go back to the story about those two, about those seven, actually seven captives, they were released. And it just so happened that I saw when one was released, they weren't all released at the same time.

And one of those captives was explicitly a non-Christian. This is not a judgment on my part, he said. It was very clear where his faith values stood. And they said, do you? The news cameras said, you're out, you're free. You're going to see your family. Do you have a word for your captors? And the first man, the non-Christian, said, yes. And he looked into the camera and said, I hope you die a slow and painful death. And then some weeks later, another group was released. And in that group there were a couple of Christians, and one of them was the man who was in captivity the longest. And they asked him the same question. Do you have a word for your captors? And he said, I'm making a long story short. There was a period of time when I was extraordinarily angry at these men for the way they were treating us. But I'm a Christian, and I was in prison for a long time, and I know that God calls me to forgive them. And so I do. I forgive them, and I hope and pray the best for you.

And that's a life of a man who's been transformed by the gospel of Christ. And I hope that is our life. The motive comes second in the story. Jesus says, here's the motive for forgiving each other. Here's the motive for putting things back together, for talking to your friends, your brothers or sisters. Here's the way you do it.

But always the motive is one to live a life of love and mercy and patience. As Jesus loving and patient and merciful to us.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, I thank you for this part of your word that is so needed for us many times in our lives, and probably in a small way, every week. I pray, Lord, that we would be forgiving and merciful and kind and shaped by the gospel in which you forgave Lord Jesus, heavenly father, Holy Spirit, you forgave us all that debt, and so teach us how to have mercy on others.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.