

## our debtors

## Chat with the children

- *Drama!*

## Introduction

- IMAGINE: The minister of a small, fairly informal congregation is talking to people and getting things ready just before a service; just then in rushes one of the congregation, Joe, with a glass of water in his hand, breathless....
  - *Joe: I'm sorry to interrupt but, er, as I parked my car outside this morning I'm afraid I bumped right into yours... a bit. But, not to worry, my car was only scratched a little!*
  - Pastor: **That's OK - I forgive you!**
  - *Joe: Its really upsetting me, 'cos it was you I bumped into last month, wasn't it!*
  - Pastor: **I forgive you!**
  - *Joe: But, as I backed my car away from yours just now, I'm afraid I pulled your exhaust off too. I'm sorry!*
  - Pastor: **Really - I do forgive you!**
  - Joe: Yes, but that's not all. I tried to pull the exhaust free of the car and it came away suddenly and scratched all along your back wing.
  - Pastor: **I forgive you. It's all right!**
  - *Joe: That's not the end of it. As it came away, the exhaust punched a hole in your petrol tank. Just a little one. And... well, the petrol has run out.*
  - Pastor: **I forgive you.**
  - *Joe: I don't really know how to say this, but... I felt really upset and I'm afraid I thought a cigarette might calm me down.... Well, the Fire Brigade came quickly and they were very good.*
  - Pastor: **Don't worry. I forgive you.**
  - *Joe: Under the circumstances, I thought you'd probably need a drink of water, so I thought the kindest thing to do was to bring you one. Oops! (spills water down pastor!)*
  - Pastor: (tightly clenched teeth!) **I forgive you.**
  - *Joe: Oh, it's so good to deal with a REAL Christian. I'll see you later and sort things out.*
  - Pastor: (Seething with anger) **Lord, I was so angry and annoyed at that stupid idiot! I felt like throttling him. Please, do you forgive me?**
- **God: Of course I do!**
- None of us find forgiving people easy.
- Especially when its someone who rubs us up the wrong way, who repeatedly lets us down, or who has done something that has deeply hurt us.
- In the passage we read earlier Jesus teaches us the way he himself lived - the way of **grateful, generous and gritty** forgiveness:

## Forgiveness Should Be Grateful

- The forgiveness Jesus taught about was first of all grateful.
- Look again at the parable we read this morning.
- The first servant was forgiven millions of pounds of debt:
  - he had the right to ask for his few pounds back, but...
  - **he should have been grateful!**
  - he should have allowed that gratitude to spill over into the way he lived!
- We haven't been forgiven millions of pounds of debt.
- **We've been forgiven something much bigger, much heavier, much more burdensome than that!**
- We've been forgiven our sins, all our wrong-doings, all the times we've thought of ourselves and not God and those he has placed around us.

- Maybe we find it hard to appreciate just how much immense that forgiveness is...  
**John Newton:**
- Many of you will have heard of John Newton. He was a slave trader who was converted to Christianity in the 18th century. He wrote the hymn "**Amazing grace**" that we still sing today. He was converted when he cried to God for mercy in the midst of a storm at sea, and went on to become a minister.
- He wrote this epitaph for himself and, when he died in 1807, it was erected in the church of St Mary Woolnoth, London, where he had been minister:
  - "**John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the faith he long laboured to destroy....**"
- He had no trouble appreciating how much he'd been forgiven - and he spent his life in service of his Master, his Lord, Jesus Christ.
- We should be the same - **grateful for what God has done, and out of what we have been forgiven able to forgive others.**

## **Forgiveness Should Be Generous**

- In particular, we need to learn to be generous in our forgiveness.
  - out of our gratitude will grow generosity in forgiveness.
- Someone who is generous gives easily, not stingily.
- For instance, it's a joy for a parent or a grandparent to give to a child:
  - though the chore of Christmas shopping has started for many of us, and money is often tight, we are able to be generous despite all the hassle, out of love.
- Peter thought he was being generous in suggesting that he forgive someone 7 times!
- Jesus' reply (which doesn't imply counting up to 70 x 7 (490!)) showed enormous **generosity**.
- Because we have been forgiven **MUCH**, we will forgive **MUCH**, and **OFTEN!**
  - forgive and forgive again

## **Forgiveness Should Be Gritty**

- Finally, forgiveness needs to be **gritty**. It needs to work in the real world.
- Jesus not painting an ideal so far away we can't come close!
  - see verses 15-17, just before the section we read! Practical steps for healing relationships within the church context
  - very forgiving approach in a society where "an eye for an eye" was Scripture!
  - (v.17: and remember how Jesus treated pagans and tax collectors!!)
- Jesus knew that forgiving others wasn't easy - forgiveness has a cost, that we must be prepared to pay.
- **David Watson:**
- A leading Church of England clergyman in the late 1970's. In autobiography of those last few years of life, he writes this:
  - About one o'clock one Advent Sunday morning, I had a bad asthmatic attack. In my helplessness, I cried out to God to speak to me. I'm not very good at listening to God, but between one and three o'clock God spoke to me so powerfully and painfully that I have never felt so broken before him...
  - God showed me that any "love" for him meant nothing unless I was truly able to love from my heart my brother or sister in Christ. As the Lord put various names into my mind I began to write letters to about twelve people asking for forgiveness for hurting them, for still being inwardly angry against them - or whatever. It was the most painful pruning and purging I can remember in my entire Christian life. But fruitful! Already some replies to my letters have reduced me to tears.
- **David Watson learned, painfully, that forgiveness needed to work in the real world, in the sometimes difficult and painful relationships we have with others.**
  - **he learned that this was the way Jesus led, and that we need to follow**

## Conclusion

- The servant in the parable who didn't forgive his fellow was thrown in jail.
- And Jesus concluded, "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."
  - our forgiving others is a **sign** of the forgiveness God has effected for us
  - are we truly knowing and appreciating all that God has done for us if we refuse to forgive?
- That's why Jesus linked them together so closely in the Lord's Prayer:
  - *...and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...*
  - (remember again we don't do this alone, but by the Spirit's power, which is why we bring these issues to God in prayer, regularly)
- Lets learn to forgive:
  - with gratitude
  - with generosity
  - and with grit, in the real world.
- *Time for self examination, like David Watson...*
  - then prayer before closing hymn, 104, "O worship the King, all glorious above"