

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 30

In the previous lesson from Luke 17:1-4, we examined the topics of sin, repentance and forgiveness. Speaking to his disciples about sin, Jesus issues a stern warning, pronouncing woe upon the person who causes others to sin: “It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin” (Luke 17:1-2).

The reason this warning is so severe is that at least two, and possibly more, lives are at stake—the life of the one being drawn into sin and the life of the one tempting that person. In each case, a life is being defiled before a holy and righteous God, to whom all are accountable. The writer of Hebrews makes this point clear: “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13).

In Luke 17:3, Jesus teaches on forgiveness: “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.” He expands this idea by urging to forgive others as many times as they repent and ask forgiveness: “If he sins against you seven times in a day and seven times comes back to you and says ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

Several truths emerge from this passage. First, because we are human, we are going to make mistakes, but we must not become tools of evil. Second, when someone does sin against us, we are to rebuke them. Third, if the offender repents, we are always to forgive “...just as in Christ, God forgave [us]” (Ephesians 4:32). May God grant each of us the grace to forgive as we have been forgiven.

Even when someone sins against us and fails to acknowledge it, we are still to forgive, even though there seems to be no explicit biblical command to do so. An example of such graciousness is Stephen, who while being stoned, cried out for God to forgive the perpetrators. Jesus is the greatest example of this principle, pleading as He hung dying in our place, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing” (Luke 23:32-34).

As you continue your study of Luke 17, take a moment to thank God for His forgiveness of you in Christ. Then ask Him to grant you insight and understanding of His Word, that you might grow in the love and joy of Jesus.

Faith

1. Read Luke 17:5-10.
 - A. From verse five, how do the disciples respond to Jesus’ exhortation to continue forgiving those who sin against them?

 - B. Why do you think they respond like this?

 - C. Think about it: Is it easy or difficult to forgive someone who comes in repentance? Why? Please explain.

 - D. Is it costly to forgive someone who requests it? Please explain.

- E. Think about it: Is it fair to forgive the person who appropriately acknowledges their offense? Why or why not?
- F. Is it merciful to forgive such a person? Please explain.
- G. Is it right to forgive someone who returns in repentance? Why or why not?
- H. Is it worthwhile to forgive a repentant offender? Please explain.
- I. Dr. Robert Norris, former Senior Pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church, once said, "It is always a tragic mistake to be unforgiving." Do you agree or disagree? Please explain.
- J. Read Matthew 27:45-46, Luke 23:32-34 and John 19:28-30. How costly was it for God the Father, God the Son and the Son of Man, and God the Holy Spirit to forgive? Please explain.

K. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. What do you think the Lord means when He says, “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sin no more”? Does God really forgive you? Does He really remember none of your sin? If these things are true, on what basis are they?

L. Jesus, responding to His disciples’ amazement at His instruction to forgive the same offender repeatedly, illustrates the principle with a story.

(1) From Luke 17:6, state the principle with the illustration.

(2) Which is more important, great faith in a little god or little faith in a great God? Please explain.

(3) Summarize the story from Luke 17:7-10.

- D. Tell why you think Jesus asks the following questions: “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”
- E. One leper—the Samaritan—took time to return and thank Jesus. What does this suggest about a proper response when God blesses or helps us?

The Coming of the Kingdom of God

3. Read Luke 17:20-37.
- A. What do the Pharisees ask Jesus?
- B. From Luke 17:20-21, what is Jesus' response?

C. Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is within you." Do you think He means that the kingdom of God is something internal within your heart? Or do you think He meant that because He is present with them that the kingdom of God is where He is? Matthew 1:23. Please explain.

D. In Luke 17:22-37, Jesus further explains the coming of the kingdom of God.

(1) What instruction and warnings does Jesus give to His disciples?

(2) What facts does Jesus use to support the main points of His instruction to the disciples?

(3) What do the disciples ask Jesus (verse 37). What do they mean?

- (4) Jesus responds: “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.” How do you interpret this?
- (5) From Matthew 24:36, 42 and 46, summarize the heart attitude we are to have regarding the return of Jesus and the coming of the kingdom of God?
- (6) How has the kingdom of God “already come” in one sense but “not yet fully come” in another sense?