

Wednesday 23 March 2011 - Love Mercy

Matthew 18: 21 - 35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 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.

26 As this man knelt on his knees before him, "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay it back." 27 The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.

28 But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded.

29 His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back."

30 But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" With anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

34 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

"To err is human, to forgive is divine" exists as a saying because it sometimes is so difficult to forgive someone who has hurt us or has wronged us. We hold onto that pain. We hold onto that grudge. It makes us feel justified. But as Anne Lamott writes "withholding forgiveness is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die." Most of the time the person that we're so angry with isn't even aware of our anger or couldn't care less, and we end up doing more damage to ourselves than we do to them.

As much as God tells us to forgive others so that we may receive forgiveness, we also need to forgive so that we ourselves can begin to heal. What we cling to anger and bitterness, our hearts and minds start to fester and it begins to affect our whole being. As we begin to forgive, and thus the world begins differently because forgiveness is often a lengthy process, we slowly allow that wound to begin to heal and while there may always be a scar, a reminder of our past trauma/hurt, it will not hurt as deeply. The saying goes "let go and let God". When the situation demands justice and we hold onto that pain