PARABLES

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

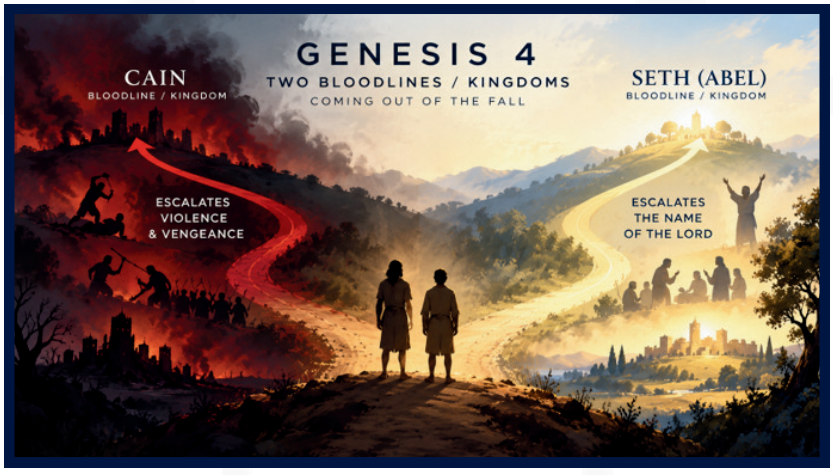
October 18, 2026
The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant
Matthew 18:21–35 | Pastor Brent Foster

Icebreaker – Looking Back

- Thinking back over both parts of Matthew 18, what has challenged you or changed the way you think about handling conflict in Christian relationships?

Digging into Matthew 18:21–35 - Escalating Mercy Instead of Vengeance
Jesus' response to Peter, *"not seven times, but seventy-seven times,"* echoes Lamech's boast about vengeance in Genesis 4:23–24. (from Cain's bloodline)

- Why do you think Jesus deliberately contrasts His Kingdom with Lamech's approach to relationships?
- Why is retaliation often our natural response when someone hurts us? What might it look like to escalate mercy instead?
- Where have you seen vengeance escalated "77-fold" causing devastation?



Continued on the other side.

The Unmerciful Servant

- Read Matthew 18:23–35.
  - What strikes you most about this parable? What do you find surprising or troubling?
  - The servant was forgiven an unimaginable debt but refused to forgive a much smaller one. Why do you think we sometimes struggle to extend the very mercy we've received?

Understanding Redemption

In the sermon, we explored how someone trapped in overwhelming debt needed another person to pay the ransom price to secure their freedom. Pastor Brent said *"In those days people didn't declare bankruptcy, they declared slavery"*

- How does this picture of redemption help you appreciate what Jesus has done for us?
- How should remembering the depth of God's mercy toward us change the way we respond to those who hurt or disappoint us?

Why Do We Forgive?

Pastor Brent said, *"We don't forgive because we get some personal benefit from it. We forgive because we have already been benefited by Christ."*

- How is this different from the individualistic way our culture often talks about forgiveness?
- What difference does it make when our motivation for showing mercy comes from looking at Christ rather than ourselves?

Making It Personal - Two Flavors of Mercy and Forgiveness in the Bible

The sermon highlighted two ways we practice mercy in relationships:

1. **The Unaddressed Issue:** Choosing to let something go rather than becoming easily offended (Colossians 3:12–14).
2. **The Addressed Issue:** Having a necessary, grace-filled conversation to address a wrong (Matthew 18:1–20).

- Which of these comes more naturally to you? Which do you find more difficult, and why?
- How can we discern when to graciously let something go and when love requires us to address it directly?

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Seeing Others Through Eyes of Mercy
Jesus calls us to escalate mercy rather than vengeance.

- Think of a relationship where you find it difficult to extend mercy. What might change if you began seeing that person through the lens of the mercy God has shown you?
- What is one practical step you could take this week to become someone who is less easily offended and more generous with mercy?

Prayer
Pray that God would help us become a community known for extending the extravagant mercy we have received through Jesus.

Missions Prayer: Pray for Rob and Camille Young as they travel to Thailand this week to serve with For Freedom International. Pray for protection, wisdom, fruitful ministry, and opportunities to demonstrate the love and mercy of Jesus.

