

The sin of a brother
Matthew 18:1-20
September 10, 2023

There is quite a bit in the text for today. There are all sorts of sermons in the text. We have the account of the disciples wanting to know who the greatest in the kingdom of heaven would be. We are reminded of the account of the mother of James and John who asked Jesus if her sons could be seated, one on His left and one on His right. Yes, she wanted places of honor for her sons. Jesus addressed her and them with, it was not His place to put them on either side of Him in His kingdom. He pointed out that the real great people were little children, who had no problem believing.

Then He goes on to another possible sermon, one where a person is to deal drastically with sin and temptation. Yes, it would be better to have just a little of your body left and be in heaven than to have all your body parts and be in the fires of hell.

Matthew then goes on to another sermon topic and that is the leaving of the 99 to go find the one that is lost. Yes, all are important, especially those who are lost as all are important to God proved by Him sending His only begotten Son to die for all.

Then Matthew goes on to the verses that tell how we are supposed to deal with a brother who sins against us. Yes, he lists a few things that need to be done in order that we care about our brother to such an extent that we will take measures against the sin they have committed to help them to see their wrong, repent and be welcomed back into the church.

The final text that brings up a possible sermon is the last part of the pericope for today that is associated with the previous text and that is the text that points out the responsibility of a person or the church when it comes to sins that should be forgiven and ones that should be held back from forgiveness, as well as bringing a sinner around to the seriousness of sin and their sin in particular.

So about now you may be wondering which of these portions of the text for today I am going to be using. By the title of the sermon you already have put 2 and 2 together to know it is the one about a brother who sins against you. How are you to handle it?

Some of you know that it is the text that is a pet peeve of mine. So many problems could be solved if everyone took this text to heart. It is not only a text that others have messed up but sad to say, yes, I have not always handled things the best way either. That doesn't mean that it still doesn't upset me when it happens.

Matthew probably saw it happen in his day and the Lord used him to write about it. Yes, he had just written about the other topics for sermons which led to this text and to the importance of all with the 99 and 1, which carries on through the text for today.

With the text used for the sermon for today, we have, what I think is one of the most important texts to keep in mind when dealing with sin in others against us, and the church dealing with sin in the members of the church.

Some of you may have been around when a member of the church has to be dealt with to the betterment of the church and the member. All of you have seen members that have moved away from the church for one reason or another. We don't want them to move away, no, we want them to continue with us but many times they have something that makes them uncomfortable coming here, too many times, it is because of sin, on their part or on the part of another.

Yes, the sin needs to be dealt with. To not deal with it is to, in a sense, make it seem that it is no big deal. But it is a big deal. Think about it. What happens when a child is allowed to get away with sin? He thinks that if he can get away with it one time, surely he can get away with it another. If two times, why not three and on and on.

Is it any different with an adult or teenager? No, we see it now on the TV where whole gangs of young people go into stores and take everything, maybe for themselves but how much of it ends up on eBay or maybe sold at a big discount to others who will profit from it, too. In some places they aren't to be arrested until the total theft in their hands is over \$950. How many of you could afford to have \$950 taken from you times 10 or 20?

Can you imagine what the insurance cost for those stores are likely to be later, if they can even get insurance? If they get away with it now, what more do they think they can get away with, murder?

You might be thinking your sin isn't like that, isn't that great but the moment you think that, what have you just done? You have just said to yourself that what you have done, isn't really that important. What you have just done, is really thinking your choices are better than God who put the law in place for your good and the good of the world.

Sin, is all about placing yourself over and above God. It doesn't matter what sin it is, you are thinking what you need out of this is so important to you that you were willing to let God take second place.

Matthew talks of how to go about dealing with that sin. When that sin is affecting you, even though you might not think about it, it is sin mainly against God as David said in the Psalms.

We might get to thinking if they sin against God, let Him deal with it and yet, what responsibility do we have as His children? Children, yes we are His children by adoption, adopted through the water and the Word.

Jesus was telling those there that day that all people are important to Him and they are worth some effort on His kids part. The response could be to make it so public that they would be so ashamed that they would never think twice about sinning in that way again. Too many times I think that people think that handling it this way is the easy way out, let a bunch of people come down on them for their sin.

The thing of it is, that sin that you want to put out there for all the world to see has been a sin not just against you. Yes, Jesus paid for all sin on the cross, yet when that sin is against us, being personal and all, we can get a little bent out of shape. We would like some kind of restitution for how we were harmed.

We might have our way with dealing with them but what about Jesus? What would He say as to how to deal with a sin against you? He lays it out pretty plainly. The first thing to do is to go to the person who has sinned against you. You have been sinned against and the first thing you are supposed to do is confront the offender with the sin. Now the ball is in your court.

It would be easy to just go public, but then what happens? The offender, or perceived offender, has to deal with so many who now know what has happened or at least from the viewpoint of one. Has there ever been a time when a perceived sin may have been an accident or a misunderstanding? Only too often. What would have happened though if the one who thought they were wronged at least went to the person who they think wronged them? Could it have been worked out between the two with no one else the wiser? How would the world view the two of you after it was worked out between the two? They wouldn't even know about it and any mistake or misunderstanding would never come to light and all could go about their day without any others the wiser.

If that sin is exposed, the two parties deal with forgiveness that way and come to an answer with forgiveness accepted, then life can go on as usual. If it doesn't work out then Jesus says to take one or two others along. Then there are only three or four involved in all this. Yes, the law of the Jews required at least two witnesses. Even though the religious leaders got a couple guys to lie, Pilate knew how to get the testimony against Jesus and found out that the two guys couldn't be trusted so he found no cause for Jesus to be killed.

If it was just between the two of you, great. And if just a couple more might be involved, you would have to agree it would be better than the whole church being involved as a whole bunch of people would have to be dealing with this passage and some are more

willing than others to follow the guidelines Jesus has for us in this passage and who knows how much damage could be done to the person or even the church if this text isn't followed?

Might it finally get to the point that the person who sinned will not repent? They may have thought that it wasn't that important or just wanted to do their own thing. It may be as a child who is caught and is disciplined. They might not think that much about it but it is only when consequences are applied that their eyes are opened and they finally see the seriousness of their sin.

Isn't that what the whole prison system is supposed to be trying to do? I know we wonder how well they do it as there are some who don't take even prison seriously enough and find themselves back in there, time and time again.

The church doesn't imprison but can say to the unrepentant sinner that it is serious, and so much so that he will be taken off the rolls with the stipulation that if they want to come back, they need to recognize the error of their ways, publicly ask for forgiveness and then their relationship can be restored.

God says that when a person asks for forgiveness, He forgives that sin and remembers it no more. We have a hard time forgetting, not being God but forgiveness should be no different than the forgiveness which we have received from Jesus.

Jesus wants the best for all. He doesn't want us spoiling relationship with each other just because we can't step up to the one who has somehow offended us with their perceived sin. Yes, I know the text says your brother has sinned against you, which is from your viewpoint so it is YOU having a problem. If you are sinned against then it is up to you to go to them to try to get it resolved.

Only, and I say only, if they don't listen to you, then bring someone else in on it. If they don't want to listen then, bring it before the church. Yes, you might want to let them know the next step so that they can think that wrinkle over. The idea is to bring them around to recognize their sin and come back so this last step is not to be hurried into but leave time for the Holy Spirit to work on them. Then after a time to allow the Holy Spirit to work and others in the church to try to reason with them, then let them know it is the time for separation and their exclusion until they repent and come to the church for forgiveness.

A lot of law but the Lord wants them back too. For them to continue on in there sin may mean that they will find themselves against the Lord even unto separation, eternal separation from everyone, including the Lord. May it never lead to that and yet the final judgement is with the Lord.