

The Gospel of Matthew

Session 17: Matthew 18: Characteristics of the Christian Community

NEXT WEEK: Matthew 18, John 1:12-13, Galatians 6:1-2 CCC: 526, 1443-1445, 1461-1463, 2284-2287, 2832-2843

Review: The old is passing away and the new has arrived. Jesus had prepared Peter and His apostles to carry on and to begin building the Kingdom of God; their positions are not like those of an earthly kingdom but tied to the power and authority of Jesus.

NOTES AND QUOTE

1. In this 4th Book Discourse, we will begin to understand that the heart of Jesus gospel is forgiveness which is necessary to be a part of God's family; we must be as children in the sense of recognizing their dependence on their father/parents – children *listen* to their parents and follow the *guidance* of their parents (Parable of the Lost Sheep and Guardian Angels); Jesus shows apostles how to care for people live in good relationships with each other and Him; God put us together in the church
2. Chapter 18 all about *relationships* and how the world sees us *behaving* differently, loving one another, forgiving each other that changes hearts; Paul's 1st journey established many churches; his 2nd journey to the established churches was to solve problems and heal relationships through Jesus' teachings (Christian song of 19th century: *They will know we are Christians by our love...*)
3. Verses 15 – 20, authority given by Jesus to Peter is extended to the Apostles – solution is that when we have a problem with someone, we must go to them privately and try to resolve the issue, not share the problem with others in the of gossip; takes maturity and confidence in God and Holy Spirit to do this - *ecclesial discipline*¹
4. Most problems associated with un-forgiveness; Jesus said to forgive 7 x 70; how many times did God forgive Israel; forgiveness is both family oriented and judicial similar to a regular court; Peter was given authority to preside these disputes (Pope may call for year of Jubilee)²
5. Jesus begins His ministry with a Jubilee by reading Isaiah 61 and concludes by saying "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."; He ushers in the end of the exile (the lost 400 yrs from time of Exile) – Forgiveness is always the message; He tells parable of king forgiving servant of a large debt but servant will not forgive another of a much smaller debt; OT is image of a vengeful God, NT is image of a forgiving God; Jesus then turns to His disciples and states "So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his HEART." (Matt 18:35)
6. The ability to forgive is a gift from God given to maintain harmony both with God and in our homes whether married or single (John 17: 32 – 33) (and in our churches, our nation, our workplace); Satan wants to *bait* us into conflict leads to un-forgiveness; Finnish psychologist: *The reason our culture has so many problems with depression and anxiety and self-despair is because we do not know how to suffer. Just in living, we get hurt but we bury the hurt, and it eats away at our very soul*; Jesus showed us how to suffer and how to forgive
7. *Nature of the Trap* – we do not know it is a trap to trick us into sin, we grab it, and once trapped we cannot get out without help – only *forgiveness* can release us
8. Our first inclination is to punish the person(s) who hurt us – make them *pay*! Forgiveness puts us in an impossible situation where we are expecting from somebody else what they cannot pay – Jesus paid this debt He did not owe
9. Wanting to punish others really only hurts ourselves; **forgiveness is a choice of will; giving forgiveness means we TRUST GOD completely...it is the hardest part of being a Christian but that's the part that will change the world; as Christians, we are the people who forgive**

¹ **Ecclesial discipline** – Church **discipline** is the practice of censuring church members when they are perceived to have sinned in hope that the offender will repent and be reconciled to God and the church. It is also intended to protect other church members from the influence of sin.

The Bible's teaching on corrective Church discipline (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_discipline)

Ultimate authority resides in Christ, who authorizes the Church to use it as needed. (Matthew 18:17)

Corrective discipline is for

- Troublemakers and those who sow discord. (Romans 16:17)

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- The unruly and disorderly. (1st Thessalonians 5:14)
- Those who disobey the great doctrines of the faith. (2nd Thessalonians 3:13-14)
- Those who deny the great doctrines of the faith. (1st Timothy 6:3-4)

Procedures in discipline

- Arrange a private meeting with the offender. (Matthew 18:15)
- If a private meeting fails, meet with them and several witnesses. (Matthew 18:16)
- Admonish and warn them. (Titus 3:10)
- As a final resort, bring the matter up to the whole church. (Matthew 18:17)
- Remove their membership and avoid them. (Romans 16:17)
- Be ready to forgive them when repentance occurs. (2nd Corinthians 2:7)

Purpose of Discipline

- To maintain the standards of the church to a watching world. (Matthew 5:13-16)
- To keep sin from spreading throughout the church. (Joshua 7:3); (1st Corinthians 5:6-7)
- Help the guilty person find their way to God. (2nd Corinthians 2:6-8)
- To escape God's judgment upon habitually sinning saints. (1st Corinthians 11:30)^[5]

²**Special 'Holy Year' Is About To Begin in the Catholic Church**

For months now, Vatican watchers have been talking about the upcoming jubilee as one of the biggest events of Pope Francis' pontificate. But what's it all about? Why will millions of pilgrims be descending on Rome to walk through a door? With the jubilee set to begin Tuesday (Dec. 8), we take a look at why it's so important and what Catholics can expect from the Holy Year.

Q: What is a jubilee?

A: In the Catholic Church, a jubilee — or a holy year — is a religious event that involves the forgiveness of sins, as well as reconciliation. But the idea of a jubilee dates back to the Bible: "And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year and proclaim freedom throughout the land for all who live on it," Leviticus 25:10. For the ancient Israelites, the jubilee was a time when properties were returned to their original owners or legal heirs, slaves were set free and creditors were barred from collecting debts. Pope Boniface VIII in 1300 declared the first Christian jubilee, beginning with the opening of the Holy Door, an entrance to St. Peter's Basilica, usually blocked, through which pilgrims can enter. Other holy doors are also opened for this jubilee in Rome and around the world for the first time; the year ends when they are closed. On Sunday (Nov. 29) Pope Francis opened a door at the cathedral in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, as a symbolic start to the Holy Year.

Q: What is the Jubilee of Mercy all about? A: Catholic practice has been to mark the jubilee every 25 years, and many expected the next jubilee to commence in 2025. But a pope can proclaim an "extraordinary" jubilee when he deems necessary. The Jubilee of Mercy will end on Nov. 20, 2016. During a jubilee, Catholics can obtain special indulgences, or remission for their sins, if they fulfill certain conditions and do good works or make pilgrimages.

For example, Francis told priests to forgive repentant women who have had an abortion during the jubilee. While this does not mark a change in church teaching, which still views abortion as a grave sin, it makes it possible for women who have gone through an abortion to participate in church life. In outlining his views on the jubilee, Francis wrote: "The time has come for the church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters."

Q: What are the main events?

A: The Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica will be opened by Francis on Tuesday, with a series of events including some dedicated to young people, the sick and disabled, prisoners and those involved in works of charity.

Other smaller events are planned before the Holy Door is shut on Nov. 20, 2016.

The jubilee is expected to draw millions of pilgrims from around the world.

Q: What will the Holy Year achieve? A: It will call on Catholics to reflect on the theme of mercy and serve as a unifying moment for the church globally. The Vatican has been rocked by scandal since the last jubilee, including revelations of widespread clerical sexual abuse, while it has also struggled to stay relevant to modern-day life.

Rather than pushing church doctrine on people, Francis wants to showcase an inviting faith. The church "*falls into the temptation to follow a hard line, into the temptation to underline only the moral rules, but so many people are left out,*" he told Italian magazine "Credere" on Dec. 2.

Q: How does this fit into Pope Francis' papacy? A: Francis has long called for the church to take a more pastoral approach. Recently, he added: "*I continue to say that today the revolution is that of tenderness, because from here derives justice and everything else.*"