
“A Tale of Two Erasers”

Children’s Sermon on Forgiveness and Mercy
from Matthew 18:21-35



Main Objective: In some ways, the story of the unmerciful servant seems a bit harsh. After all, in the end, the servant did receive the punishment due him, but only because he refused to show mercy to others. God grants us mercy no matter what we do, but out of gratitude to Him we want to live lives that offer forgiveness to those around us. The parable reminds us that God is a master of justice, but His mercy outweighs that every time. He loves us and will wipe away our sins, no matter what. This message aims to help students value and understand that. As people, we mess up. But God’s forgiveness is pure and perfect.

Law/Gospel Theme: We sometimes develop the idea that being forgiven requires us to do something—we somehow must earn God’s love and acceptance. The Law would condemn us and have us live under fear of punishment. Mercy means that we don’t get that punishment we deserve. Because of Jesus, we receive Heaven instead of punishment! He gives us all that we need, and we want to pass that forgiveness along to other people, as well.

Optional Materials: Whiteboard and marker; paper and pencil; erasers

Bible Passage: Matthew 18:21-35

Message Note: As with most messages, the details of how you choose to communicate this are adaptable and should cater to timing as well as to your audience and student needs. Use your judgment and ideas to best serve students.

More Teaching Help for Matthew 18:21-35

You can watch a [demonstration of this object lesson](#) message on our [YouTube channel](#).

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Children's Sermon Object Lesson

(Matthew 18:21-25) The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

Greet children, with a stapler and paper in hand—or other items, if desired:

Hello, children of God!

I want to talk about something special today. Well, we always discuss important and special topics, of course, but this one is particularly critical because it has to do with our relationship with God, and our relationships with one another. We are talking about forgiveness. Has anyone ever done something wrong to you? Something that made you upset, and you had to deal with it? *(Allow for brief responses)*

Here's another question: have YOU ever done something that you knew was wrong? Maybe against a friend, or maybe even against your parents? It can be hard to admit when we do wrong, but it's important to say sorry, and it's important to ask for and receive forgiveness. Sometimes we as people have a hard time forgiving, but the great thing for us is that God gives us mercy time and again.

I want to show you what this is like... what's this? *(Hold up an eraser)* That's right, it's an eraser. Now, if I scribble or draw on a piece of paper *(demonstrate making pencil marks and mistakes on a paper)*, and I mess something up, I might take the eraser and try to clean it off... *(Work with the eraser a bit, ideally one that is going to smudge the paper so the pencil does not disappear completely)*.

Hmm...it sort of took it away, but you can still see some marks on the paper, can't you? This is a little like human forgiveness. It's important for us to forgive one another and love one another, but sometimes, even though we try, we still have smudges and reminders of what other people have done to us.

Now, look at this *(demonstrate white board and markers)*. So if I mark on this, and then use an eraser, or a tissue, or even a sock or my finger to erase it *(erase the marks to reveal a shiny white clean board)*, it comes off completely, doesn't it? I can clean it up and make it look like it never happened!



Even if I mark again...and again...and again...that eraser will take it right off. This is more like how God's forgiveness works. He knows that we have made mistakes, and will make mistakes again. But He forgives us every time, and lets us start over fresh and new!

In the Gospel story today, there was a man who owed his king a huge debt. He couldn't re-pay it, but the king erased it and said it was okay! However, that man turned around to a friend who owed him just a little bit of money, and got so mad he had the guy thrown into jail! The king was angry that his servant had not treated his friend with the same forgiveness he was shown. Jesus told this parable to remind us that God has given us a huge amount of mercy. That means we deserve to be punished for our sins, and instead He wipes our slate clean!

We can be thankful for that, and in return, God wants us to pass that along. He wants us to forgive one another when people do things against us. This is what we say in the Lord's prayer, after all! Now, forgiving others doesn't mean we let them hurt us or walk all over us. But it does mean recognizing God's mercy, and out of gratitude for that passing it along. Our forgiveness to others is never "perfect."

We struggle, and we need God's help even to show other people mercy. But we can take comfort in knowing that His forgiveness wipes away our sins, things we've done and even things we don't know we're going to do yet! God will always renew and restore us. Why don't we thank Him for that, and we can ask for His help as we show mercy to those around us?

Children's Prayer Moment

(Have kids repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for granting us mercy and forgiveness

Help us to forgive one another

Give us peace and not bitterness

Thank you for erasing our sins

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!



Matthew 18:21-35 The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

Bible Verses/story to Reference:

“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.”^[g]

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^[h] 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 “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled 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.^[i] 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 canceled 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?’ ³⁴ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵ “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

-Matthew 18:21-35





This lesson was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

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