

Grow, Pray, Study for Sunday September 13, 2020

Matthew 18:21-35

The Mercy of the Fallen

Forgiveness is a difficult spiritual practice. Hurts are often too deep to let go.

A man shared his journey. When he was 4 years old his father left the family. He would ask his mother about him and she just said, "Oh, forget him!" The exit of his father left the family in harsh straits and they were on welfare for a year. The young boy was an only child so it was up to him to "man up" and "be the man of the house." The boy was taught to hate his father, and he did.

Years went by as years do. The boy, now man, had pretty much forgotten about his father. He didn't know where he was, if he was alive or dead, and he didn't care.

Shortly before his 40th birthday he was talking to a friend who was obviously a trouble maker. His friend asked, "Do you mean that you have never tried to find your father?" The son finally conceded and hired a private investigator with a nose like Columbo and a schtick like Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot. The son joined in and made cold calls to men with his same last name, "Excuse me, I was wondering if you were the guy..." Nothing ever panned out.

The son shared with his mother what he had been up to after the detective persuaded him to ask more questions of his family. With the mom it definitely wasn't easy. Then finally one day his mom broke down and said, "I was in love with another man and your father found out..."

All of a sudden the man's father went from deadbeat to hurt spouse who was only trying to save himself. It turns out his dad was nothing like he had imagined him for the last 37 years, the last 37 years of hatred and holding grudges. The man's aunt shared how playful the father was. His older sister shared how generous dad was. No longer a monster, the father was, well, a father who did the best he could at the time.

The son learned to forgive. Although his father was never found, he was found inside the son's heart where a place had been made for him. Two years later,

before his mother died, she thanked him for all he had done to clear the path for forgiveness.

-----Who in your life would you like to forgive? It takes time like any exercise, but is there at least a list of candidates?

-----In what ways do you need to forgive yourself? We cannot forgive others if we have not forgiven ourselves.

-----They say having empathy is the best path to forgive others. Everyone else has their hurts too and no one is at fault 100% usually. How can seeing the other person as someone who struggles too help you to let go of the weight of carrying your own pain?