

- Initial comments

### **Introduction**

- Big question: “what’s the worst thing a person can say and still be forgiven?”
  - “How long would you go on forgiving someone for what they say?”
  - It’s a big question
  - Maybe you’ve been tested?
  - Maybe you know what the answer should be.
  - Explore situations and example
  - Specific story?
- Going to come back to this. For now, get into story

### **Point 1: Jesus leaves no room for neutrality (22-30)**

- Tell the story
  - Wonder or rejection
- He knows our accusations
  - The Pharisees’ accusation is absurd
  - The Pharisees’ accusation is self-defeating
  - The Pharisees’ accusation is nonsensical

### **Application / Exhortation**

- Each of us must make a decision about Jesus
  - Neutrality is impossible
  - Images of heading to defeat, death
- Some things will prompt the lack of neutrality to come to the surface
  - what we should expect!
  - Earlier in Matthew 10:34
  - It is not surprising that the gospel causes division
  - We can get caught up in the goodness of unity, harmony, peace; as if they were things that we ought always to expect, and for the sake of which everything out to be sacrificed.

### **Point 2: Jesus offers infinite forgiveness for what we say (31-32)**

- This divisiveness results in many people, consciously and subconsciously, explicitly and implicitly, rejecting Jesus
  - In fact, it is the choice we all make when left to ourselves
- Sometimes we can push what our rejection of God involves by speaking all kinds of evil
  - Examples from earlier?
- The answer to what’s the worst a person can say and still be forgiven? Very bad. Terribly. Awfully.
  - Something demonstrated in the scriptures
    - David: lying, coveting
    - Peter: with Jesus, closest of friends, yet rejected him, called curses down on people. Yet Peter was forgiven.
    - Jesus on the cross as people mock him “father, forgive them”
- Passage today, J. says “every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people” and “whoever speaks a word against the son of man will be forgiven”.

- We tend to focus on exception, but let's take a moment to marvel on the primary statement: "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven".
- Understand: not an automatic get into heaven free. Jesus means these people are forgivable – but of course only if they confess and repent.
  - Evident in 1 Cor 6
- Also understand: sin is not left unpunished: Jesus took that punishment.

#### Application / Exhortation

- Confidence to come to our father
  - For the first time
  - Each time we are convicted of sin
- Liberating power of forgiveness
  - Allows us to forgive
  - Shows us how to forgive

#### **Part 2.5: The unforgiveable sin**

- This is a hard to understand teaching, and somewhat worrying
  - I don't understand it
- What it's not
  - Context of the entire bible
  - What about the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who practise homosexuality, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers, fraudsters? Yes! They can be forgiven – we know because in his first letter to the Corinthians, in chapter 6 verses 9-11 Paul names these very sins and adds the words "and that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of Our God."
  - Inclined to say this is not a single act which one commits and that's it: you're out
- No: more likely this is referring to clear rejection of clear conviction
  - Holy Spirit has a ministry of convicting people of their sin and their need for a saviour
  - Blasphemy against the holy spirit is unforgiveable because the individual refuses to receive the forgiveness offered

#### Application / Exhortation

- If you are worried about this for yourself: don't be.

#### **Part 3: The immense importance of our words (33-37)**

- The reason our words are so important: it reveals the heart

#### Application / Exhortation

- Examine your heart
- Have a heart which looks to control your words
  - Say less (Proverbs 10:19)
  - Say more

#### **Conclusion: Come to God and be transformed**

- Still might be

- Confused
  - Worried?
- Sometimes an appropriate reaction in front of God
- But...huge confidence in the infinite forgiveness of God through Christ!