Date: 9/17/2016

Title: Four Hundred and Ninety

Theme: God is always willing to forgive us; we should always be willing to forgive others.

Object: Seven M&Ms in a cup. 490 M&Ms in a jar

Text: Matthew 18:21-22 (NKJV) Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

In this passage, Peter has an important question for Jesus.

Peter wants to know how many times he should forgive another Christian who has sinned against him.

Now we know what it is to sin against God: When we break one of God’s commandments, that’s a sin against God.

The 10 commandments give a good summary of God’s law.

If we have some other God that we put before the true God of heaven we have sinned against God.

If we worship an idol or use God’s name with disrespect, or do anything we want on the Sabbath day, we have sinned against God.

If we disrespect our parents or kill somebody, or are unfaithful to the person we marry or steal or lie or covet what belongs to others, we have sinned against God.

And when we sin against God we need to come to Him in prayer and tell Him we’re sorry and ask Him to forgive us. (And if we love Jesus, He will forgive us.)

But what does it mean to sin against another person, especially a Christian brother or sister?

We sin against others when we don’t treat them the way we want to be treated?

If we are mean to others, if we call them names, if we hurt their feelings, if we say things about them that are not true, if we take things that belong to them, then we sin against our brothers or sisters.

And Peter wants to know, when a Christian friend hurts my feelings, how many times should I forgive him?

Now what does it mean to forgive someone?

When God forgives us, He takes our sin and puts it on Jesus.

And because Jesus died for our sins, God treats us as if we had never sinned.

And so when we forgive others, God wants us to treat them as if they had never sinned against us.

Even though we may not be able to forget that they hurt our feelings, we do our best to treat them like we don’t remember it at all.

Now Peter thought he was being very generous in suggesting that he should forgive his brother 7 times.

Some of the teachers in Peter’s day taught that you only had to forgive others three times when they said they were sorry.

Do you like M&Ms? Let’s pretend that this peanut M&M is forgiveness.

Forgiveness is like a piece of candy: It’s good for you and it’s good for others.

Forgiveness brings people back together. It makes life sweet instead of bitter. It gives us friends instead of enemies.

So I’m going to put 3 M&Ms in this cup. That’s how many times the Rabbis said we should forgive others.

Peter said seven times, so we’ll add three more. That’s how many times Peter suggested we should forgive others.

Now here’s what Jesus said: [Pull out two jars of M&M containing 490 M&M].

Jesus said 70 x 7. 490 times. There are exactly 490 M&M in these two jars!

What do you think Jesus meant by telling us to forgive this many times? I think He meant that we should never stop forgiving others, don’t you?

And that’s just the way God forgives us. He doesn’t keep track.

Every time we come back to Him and say we are sorry for our sins, tell Him we love Him and ask Him to forgive us, He will lay our sins on Jesus again and treat us as if we had never sinned.

Do you want to forgive others the way God has forgiven you? I do! Let’s ask Him to help us!

[After Prayer: pass out one to each: “Plain or Peanut?”]