



Welcome to our Sunday Service (27/06/21)

Receiving and Giving Forgiveness

Prepared by Mervyn

You Are My King (Amazing Love)

I'm forgiven because You were forsaken
I'm accepted, You were condemned
And I'm alive and well
Your spirit is within me
Because You died and rose again

Amazing love, how can it be
That You, my King, should die for me?
Amazing love and I know it's true
And it's my joy to honour You
In all I do to honour You

You are my King
You are my King
Jesus, You are my King
You are my King

Songwriters: Foote Billy James

Today we continue our series of looking at the core values that we aim to develop within our church community, and nurture in our own lives as followers of Jesus.

The core value we are looking at today is a wonderful, liberating and life giving concept, and interestingly we can only really enjoy this gift from God if we give it away! Our theme today is forgiveness.

Forgive to Move On



Happy

Birthday

Jean C

(29th June)

God Bless You!



Interactive Prayer

Father God, we set aside some time to worship you today.

We praise you for the wonder of your creation...
(Thank God for 3 things you love in nature)

We thank you for the many promises in your word... *(Speak out some of God's promises)*

We invite you Holy Spirit to nurture the attitude of Jesus in our lives...
(List some of Jesus' characteristics)

We ask that you would forgive us where we need forgiveness and ask that you would help us to forgive anyone we need to forgive. *(Quietly lift anyone you are struggling to forgive to God)*

We bring you our concerns and the people we love who are struggling with different issues.
(Tell God what's on your mind today)

Thank you God that you hear our prayers, we draw near to you now through Jesus. Amen.

Forgive us our trespasses...

Psychologists generally define forgiveness as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.

When you forgive, you are not glossing over or denying the seriousness of an offense against you. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, nor does it mean condoning or excusing offenses. Though forgiveness can help repair a damaged relationship, it doesn't necessarily require you to reconcile with the person who harmed you, or release them to get away with what they've done

Instead, forgiveness brings the forgiver peace of mind and frees him or her from corrosive anger and involves working to let go of deeply held negative feelings that can hold someone in a toxic prison. In that way, it empowers you to recognize the pain you suffered without letting that pain define you, enabling you to heal and move on with your life. To receive forgiveness when you are the guilty party is a massive blessing, and opens the door of the prison of shame. For me, forgiveness is about where I file people in my heart. Which box would you prefer to be filed in when you need forgiveness?

**Closed box of
hatred and revenge
that labels
people as...**



**Open box of grace
that considers...**



Jesus told several stories about forgiveness, we'll look at one in a moment from Matthew chapter 18. It is also a central theme in the prayer he taught his disciples. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' Again, receive it and give it away!

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?" ²² "No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven, ²³because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. ²⁴He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who

owed him millions of dollars. 25The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. 26The servant fell on his knees before the king. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay you everything!' 27The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go.



28“Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and started choking him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he said. 29His fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!' 30But he refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. 31When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. 32So he called the servant in. 'You worthless slave!' he said. 'I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. 33You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.' 34The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount.”



35And Jesus concluded, “That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”



The passage starts by Peter asking Jesus how many times he needed to forgive his brother when he sins against him? Perhaps Peter was getting fed up with one of the other disciples, and wanting to know when he could stop forgiving them; he suggests a cap of seven times –sounds fairly reasonable to me! Jesus takes it to a way higher level and says not just 7 times, but 77 times, or some versions say 70 x 7 times, that’s 490 times! I often think that if I had 490 opportunities to get something wrong each day, I would probably get it right sometimes!!

The number 7 has special significance in the Bible and 70 x 7 is synonymous with God’s perfect, eternal forgiveness. God isn’t setting an upper limit on how much we should forgive, but directing us to experience his perfect forgiveness, then to reflect it to others.

In the story we see a king who is willing to forgive, able to forgive and to whom justice matters. So let’s take a look at these three points.

1, Willing to forgive. How incredible that the king at the centre of the story is willing to forgive, and cancel this massive debt that his servant has racked up. How much more incredible that The King at the centre of all creation is willing to forgive the mountain of debt stacked against each one of us in the light of his holiness. The debt of our sin.

Back to the story, when the servant pleads for mercy, the King completely releases him from his debt, interestingly he doesn't even accept the servants offer to pay the debt in instalments! Why not accept the instalment plan?

This is a parable, so it contains lots of heavenly wisdom! If the king **had** accepted the payment plan, it would imply that the servant could somehow clear his own debt. However, the debt was so huge that the man could spend his whole life trying to pay it off and not succeed. This is a reminder for us that there is no way that we can pay off the debt of our sin before a holy God with little instalments of good behaviour. So much religious activity is connected with trying to earn our way into God's favour, but in the story, the debt is completely cancelled, there is nothing left to pay! This is an act of pure grace, the servant didn't deserve to be released from his debt and forgiven, but he was.

2, Able to forgive. The King is the only person in the story who is able to forgive the servant, as he is the person to whom the debt is owed. In any scenario, it's only the offended party that is able to offer real forgiveness to the guilty party.

Sometimes we are able to forgive someone fairly easily, maybe it's obvious that no harm was

intended, or they have sincerely apologised, and we find ourselves able to forgive and forget.

Sometimes, forgiving someone is much more difficult and is a destination that we are journeying towards; we are not yet able to forgive. The hurt is too great, the perpetrator has no remorse and we are trying to work through anger, pain and grief. Forgiveness is a bit further down the road, but always needs to be the goal (even if that requires help and support).

Forgiveness is essential if we are to avoid losing our lives to bitterness and hatred, which will ultimately damage us further in the long run. Only the one who has been sinned against is able to forgive, no one else can offer forgiveness on their behalf. For example, were I to crash Sarah's van, only Sarah could really forgive me once she'd been able to work through her anger and choose to forgive, whether I deserved it or not.



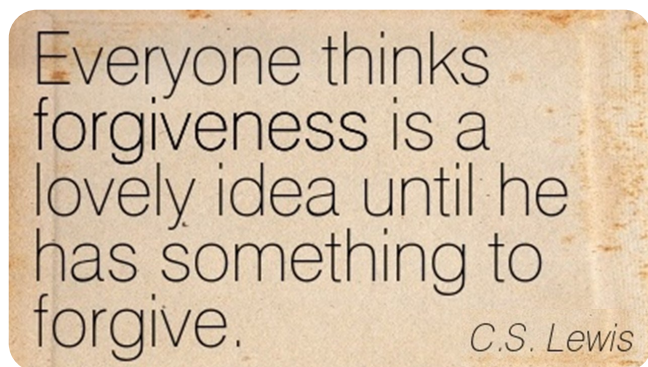
Here again, the parable points us to a higher truth and the enormity of what Jesus achieved on the cross for us. The fact that he was forgiving those who crucified him, even as they were committing the most unspeakable atrocities against him, is truly remarkable.

He knew that they had no true understanding of what they were doing, and he cries, “Father forgive them”. We’ll come back to that. We have offended God in many ways, and yet through Jesus, who took the blame and paid the price for all our sin, he is willing and able to forgive us, even though we do not deserve it.

3, Justice Matters. The story continues and takes an unexpected turn. We are puzzled and shocked by the attitude and violent aggression of the forgiven servant to his fellow servant who only owes him a small amount of money. He has him locked in a stranglehold! This forgiven servant heads directly out from the incredible grace he has been shown, fully forgiven and yet does not offer an ounce of that gift to another. Instead, he threatens, harms, and imprisons someone else who cannot repay.

In the same way that God does not hold our sin against us, he requires us not to hold the sin of others towards us against them.

The king was shocked and angry when he heard what had happened. The grace over the debt is removed, and instead the servant gets what he deserves which is actually fair. He is put into a debtors prison until every penny is paid back. In this parable Jesus is showing us how we should handle the gift of forgiveness and we find it hard!



C.S. Lewis says “Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive!”

Jesus concludes the parable with some very challenging words.... If we do not pass on the grace and forgiveness that we have received from God for our sin, then we forfeit his grace and stand before God fully accountable for our own mountain of sin and will be judged in the way that

we deserve. You can find it in verse 18, one of the many challenging teachings of Jesus which we need to take note of.

Why did he act in such a way? He clearly didn’t understand the enormity of the grace he’d been shown, the depth of forgiveness that he’d received, and he hadn’t dealt with that inherent thread which resides in our sinful nature, that desire for revenge towards those who do us wrong. The desire to make them pay for what they did to us. That ugly weed which is so deeply rooted that puts self first and wants to rub someone else’s nose in the dirt for how they treated us. Perhaps his greed saw a chance to make some cash for himself, now he was

debt-free. Justice mattered to the king, and outside of his act of grace, justice had to be done and the debt had to be paid off. Justice matters to God, he is the God of Justice and justice will be done. When we choose to forgive, we are not doing away with justice but handing the responsibility for justice to God who will judge all situations rightly and fairly.

Notice the servant in the story is not judged for struggling to forgive his fellow servant, but for completely refusing to forgive him!



Forgiveness is a “heart” issue, verse 35 talks about forgiving from your heart; this can take time and hearts can be seriously wounded, particularly if someone has hurt you or abused you in some horrendous way. What is important is that we orientate our

hearts towards forgiveness and ask Jesus to help us on that path. If we say things like, “I will never forgive that person...” we are actually keeping ourselves in the prison described in the end of the story, unable to experience deeper joy and healing

Thinking about forgiveness recently, I have had the picture of a car engine and gearbox with all its various cogs and moving parts that work together. The essential ingredient in the engine to keep it all moving smoothly is oil. Without oil the engine will quickly seize up and have to be scrapped. I remember someone saying to me, “you can drive as far as you like without petrol, but never drive without oil and water!” Water keeps the engine cool and oil lubricates all the moving parts.



As we go through life we are like moving parts in the engine of our social circle, family, colleagues, acquaintances, and in particular as we think about forgiveness as a core value of our church, our church family and Christian brothers and sisters around the world. As we interact with all these different people, sometimes we will offend others and at times they will offend us in different ways. Sometimes the smallest mis-understanding can cause a rift between people and we need the oil of forgiveness flowing in our lives to stop us seizing up and harming each other.

How is this possible? As referred to earlier, when Jesus was being crucified he prayed, “Father forgive them for they don’t know what they do.”

This momentous statement opened up a river of forgiving oil that flows both ways in history, back to the beginning of time and right up to the present day and beyond. It’s a resource that each of us can utilise in our everyday life and become a well oiled cog in the engine of our social circle!



Who is the **them** in this incredible prayer, and **what don't they know?** On one level all the people involved with the crucifixion knew very well what they were doing, but they didn't know the significance of who Jesus was, or his mission, and in turn they didn't know their own significance and worth in God's eyes. It struck me recently that the **them** in the prayer is *all humanity* and reaches right down to us in 2021. In 1 Corinthians 13:9 Paul says that at the moment, **"we know in part"** Everything we do comes from a place of not fully knowing the magnitude of God's big picture, or our significance in God's eyes, but Paul goes on to say that one day we will fully know! That prayer of forgiveness flows right down to us. That's awesome and Jesus wants us to receive it and pass it on!



And so as we close out this talk on forgiveness,

- We see the absolute crux of this parable on which the ability to forgive hinges, is that we consider and recognise the enormity of the debt of sin on our account, a debt that we can never, ever pay off by ourselves. Accepting the payment of that debt in full, made on our behalf by Jesus is where the wonder and magnitude of the gospel changes our lives; the realisation that we are covered by his grace, we are free to live with a clean slate, wiped clean everyday. If the gospel of Jesus has touched our lives, then Jesus is teaching us that God, our Father fully expects the wonder of that grace and mercy shown to us will be passed to others. Otherwise that grace is forfeited which is very serious.
- Forgiveness is a decision which may not match our feelings initially, but if we choose to forgive and ask God to help us, he will bring us to a destination of forgiveness, where we are free to move on and trust God -to whom justice matters -to deal with the perpetrator.
- And finally, unforgiveness is a prison which will keep us locked in a place of revenge and darkness, including the refusal to forgive ourselves. Sometimes, we find ourselves able to forgive others relatively easy, but torture ourselves for years over something that we have done. Sometimes, it may be pride based, or the frustration of something we failed to do and an opportunity lost, or an obsession with self that is unable to let it go and move on in the grace of God. We need to pass the grace of God onto ourselves at times. It may be something terrible that you accidentally or deliberately did. Either way God's forgiveness reaches to you and he wants you to forgive yourself.



I hope these few thoughts around a huge subject may be helpful in some way and continue to challenge us in our life together as a church. As always, do get in touch if you want to talk about this further or you need support in choosing to forgive someone who has hurt you. Amen.



May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now, and evermore. Amen.