

Sunday Service Sermons

25 April 2021

Forgiveness

It has been awhile since I have spoken about forgiveness.

Maybe I can relate my stories and you will have forgotten them.

Just two examples in my life.

One when in grade school.

A young lady in my home congregation and school liked me.

So I spent some time with her.

This is the Junior High days 7th and 8th grades.

Well I was not all that impressed with being with her and moved on.

She was not ready for that to happen and spread all kinds of rumors about me to whoever would listen.

Of course several girls took heed and shunned me.

This followed me into High School and was most uncomfortable.

I learned a lot about forgiveness through this experience.

There was nothing I could do but continue as myself as it played out.

In time it all went away.

In a few years I was dating her step-sister and spent time in her home.

A home divided between the two families.

That was an interesting experience.

The side of the house that got in the living room first claimed it for the evening and the other side of the family went to an area that connected two parts of the home.

Then many years later, at a Grade School reunion, she treated me like a best friend.

Life is so strange when it comes to people.

Then there is a person I had to learn to forgive.

I person I would have rather wished dead than forgive.

It took me many years of constant forgiving to actually obtain forgiveness.

It was like the command to be constant in prayer.

I had to be constant in forgiveness for I felt little relief each time I forgave them.

Eventually it was accomplished.

How about your struggle with forgiveness?

Deep hurts do not go away easily.

Especially when there is no response from the other person.

One way forgiveness is most difficult.

I do think most of us here today have experienced what un-forgiveness does to the person holding the bad feelings.

I also had a situation I had to forgive in College.

By that time I knew the scripture about heaping burning coals on their head.

So this time I was sweet to the offending person and watched them squirm.

Not sure this is what God had in mind but I enjoyed it.

And it did not take long until all bad feelings on my part went away.

The Christina life is a life of surrendering to God and trusting Him to handle life for us.

When I came here to be pastor I was told that policy and programs were the job of the church board.

My job was to being God's Word to the people.

I was offended at first then I realized just how freeing this was.

It is the same as surrendering your life to God.

At first you are offended that you are not capable of handling your own life.

Then it becomes a most freeing place to live.

Our job is to love God and others, praise God and serve others and bring in the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven.

Simple, direct, and precise.

Let the rest go and let God take care of it.

We cannot accomplish our task on earth if we allow offenses to inhibit our ability to love and serve others.

God promises to make it right for us.

Vengeances is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay.

So allow him to do it in His time in His way.

I'll bet it will be much better than anything you could ever do.

So, how do we approach forgiveness in light of being God's person?

It is easier to talk about forgiving than actually doing it.

As George Herbert said, "He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass."

Lawrence Sterne stated, "Only the brave know how to forgive, it is the most refined and generous pitch of virtue human nature can arrive at."

Jean Paul Richter stated, "Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness, or else when forgiving another."

Frederick William Robertson stated, "We win by tenderness; we conquer by forgiveness."

The Master stated, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." *Matt. 6:14-15.*

What is forgiveness?

It is to pardon, remit, absolve from blame, to cease to feel resentment against an offender on account of a wrong done, to abandon a claim against a debtor.

Forgiveness in the Bible, is much more.

Forgiveness involves restoring a personal relationship that has been interrupted.

The apostle John said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." *1 John 1:9.*

Two conditions must be fulfilled before forgiveness can be granted: repentance and faith.

Only Christ is invested with the authority to forgive.

When one complies with the conditions of forgiveness, Christ promises to issue forgiveness.

The law demands that sin be punished.

God forgives based on the sacrifice Christ made in our behalf.

He assumed our guilt and paid the penalty in full.

For without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

As Paul stated, "He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" *2 Cor. 5:21*

Forgiveness can only be exercised by Christ because he died for our sins.

We are told to forgive those who offend us or trespass against us.

Nothing we do can remove the guilt of sin.

Peter once asked Jesus how many times must he forgive.

He offered that it might be seven times.

Peter was being generous and using the perfect number.

But Jesus did accept this answer.

Jesus suggested seventy times seven.

That is 490 times.

Who could keep count to that number?

It is very difficult for us to forgive someone seven times but how could we ever forgive someone 490 times?

Of course we get the point, do not limit or think in terms of the limit to our forgiving of another.

The value of forgiveness is manifested in one's Christian spirit.
We all know how miserable it is to hold ill will or a grudge against someone.
Jesus can free us from such a spirit and make us happy.
Joy and an unforgiving spirit cannot live together.
What are some of the things forgiveness produces or brings to the believer?
Forgiveness awakens love for God.
Forgiveness brings peace of mind.
Forgiveness removes the cause of alienation, it removes mistrust.
Forgiveness gives us insight into the character of our Lord.
Let us be forgiving people.
The oft-repeated saying, "I can forgive, but I cannot forget", is only a half-truth.
God said, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" *Jer. 31:34*.
You and I are not infallible or all-wise, but we can climb to the heights where we cease to feel resentment in our hearts toward anyone.
It is not easy, but it is possible because our Lord has forgiven us.
Vengeance belongs to The Lord.
As Judge of the earth, He will recompense a just reward to all.
We would do well for be forgiving and leave the vengeance to him!
Un-forgiveness is just too hard on us to not practice forgiveness.
It is a virus that consumes us one moment at a time.
It is not worth it and it is God's command to forgive and leave the rest to him.
It is the only way to live in Christ!