

Today I Pray, 4: Forgive us...

Reconnect – March 21, 2010

Text: Matthew 6:9-12; Romans 8:26-27

Key Thought: Forgiveness is the antidote to evil, keeping us connected to God and others.

[Jesus said,] "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'"

Intro: "To err is human..." (Quote quiz)

- Complete the following quiz by selecting answers from the word pool: (slide)
- "To err is _____, to forgive _____." (Alexander Pope – 18th century poet)
- "After all, nobody's _____. We're only _____."

Word pool:

Homer Simpson important understandable
needed human hockey divine
robots perfect necessary possible
impossible on sale monkeys George Bush

- Things change a lot over 200 years, don't they? Or do they?
- The first quote is from Alexander Pope – the 18th century English poet
- The second quote – well, who knows who it's from, but it's certainly familiar
- "God does His thing – but we're not Him – we're only human, and we can't be expected to be like Him"

Forgiveness – God's thing, not ours

- God's sphere – it's what He does – and He has to do a lot of it with all of the sin and evil deeds in the world
- We can't be expected to live up to that kind of expectation, that kind of demand, that sort of standard

Q: Think about who has hurt you the most in your life. Do you forgive them? Do you want to? Are you trying to forgive them?

- We don't want to give up our rights – our hurts – our desire for vengeance – and to forgive is to put all of that in God's hands – rights/hurts/vengeance – instead of our own – and He forgives! Sheesh!

High expectations:

- But God didn't get the memo – clearly He has higher expectations for us than to just be the person who does the hurting and the messing up (passage)

[Jesus said,] "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'"

Trespasses? By-law?

- Trespasses / debts / sins – all kinds of different words are used, but interchangeably – use the one that best sums it up for you – “unauthorized access”
- Trespasses – the idea of the word – we don’t like it when someone’s on our lawn, but we step on other lawns every day and feel remarkably not too bad about it
- Trespasses – when someone steps on us, our property, our stuff, our area, our domain, our area of control or influence – when they hurt us, when they mess up the way things are supposed to be
- We ask God to forgive us our trespasses, because when we sin against Him, we are stepping out of what is supposed to be our area and onto His stuff – we wreck the world that He has made and hurt the people that He loves
- Anyone’s trespasses – regardless of whether they are against God or someone else – God feels the weight of all of it, because it’s His world – we’re just living in it
- Stepping off the path – stepping out of the way – going off the marked way set out for us – stepping out of what is meant to be ours into a place that we are not meant to go – where we are not allowed to go

Forgiveness BOGO:

- Explain it – forgiveness is a package deal – BOGO
- But that’s HARD! Yet Jesus didn’t hesitate to teach it, and He didn’t apologize for praying it – in fact, just in case any of them missed it when they were praying the prayer the first time around, once He finishes praying the prayer, he gives further commentary just so things are absolutely crystal clear (v.14-15 – read it)

“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6:14-15, NLT)

Forgiveness matters:

- Clearly forgiveness matters – it makes the Lord’s prayer, which is like a cheat sheet for all of life – all the highlights are on it (go through piece by piece – why each one needs to be in there) – our Father – relationship – hallowed – God must be set apart/honoured – kingdom/will – let it spread to the whole world and everyone in it – daily bread – we need to trust Him with our needs – forgive –
- So why does forgiveness matter so much? Why forgive?
 - We forgive in order to have a continuing relationship with that person – without forgiveness, there is no future with them
 - We forgive in order to move on from the incident/situation – this one is for us, too
 - But most importantly – we forgive because it’s something that God asks that we do – we forgive because when we do, we are acting like our heavenly Father (Jesus’ sacrifice, God’s forgiveness of us and all we’ve ever done)
 - Forgiveness as the antidote to the effects of evil that God gives us – the same weapon that He uses – that He wants to train us in
 - Forgiveness as a way of keeping us connected – God wants us to practice it as He does – it’s our lifeline

Consider the opposite: unforgiveness:

- The tragedy of unforgiveness – impact on your life, spiritual life, physical life, etc. – if you can't give forgiveness, how can you receive it properly? You can't...
- Jesus isn't saying here that if you don't forgive, that God won't forgive you – that somehow you have to work for your keep – it's more like if you can't forgive someone else, then how can you understand or live in God's forgiveness of you? It's an indicator – a wake up call – a cry for help
- We get good at an opposite error – sin just as much – finger pointing at those who in our opinion, “haven't forgiven” – but that's not the point at all...! We fall into the same trap, because in our rush to point the finger, we refuse to forgive them their sin, and we sin ourselves

Key Thought:

Forgiveness is the antidote to evil, keeping us connected to God and others.

...we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all things knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. **(Romans 8:26-27, NLT)**

Conclusion: LOST – “will you have me?”

- God says yes – but you need to lighten your own load, too
- Imagine: what if we had never been forgiven?
- Turn it around: who has had to forgive you? For what?

Q: Think about the person that YOU have hurt most in your life. Say their name – see their face in your mind. Think about how you hurt them / what you did to them. Do they forgive you? Why or why not? Or do you know? Why or why not? Do you want them to forgive you, or does it matter to you?

- Lost clip – the key question of asking to be forgiven: “Will you have me?” – the prayer is asking that of God, while at the same time affirming that we are doing all we can to do that for others – we are not asking anything of God that we are not trying to put into practice ourselves
- We NEED God to take us – in spite of our sins, in spite of our failings and wandering – if He wasn't on our side, what would we ever do? How would we get out of the fixes we find ourselves in?

Jesus in my bathroom:

“As we face the sin mess, Jesus prays with us. He doesn't tell us to get a mop, pail, and scrub brush so he can show us how to scrub sin from our lives, from the lives of our spouses and children, from the lives of our neighbours... Jesus does not stand aloof from the mess we are in. He joins us where we are, mired in the mud of sin... He takes his place alongside us and invites us to pray with him, “Forgive us...” God does not deal with sin by ridding our lives of it as if it were a germ, or mice in the attic. God does not deal with sin by amputation as if it were a gangrenous leg, leaving us crippled, holiness on a crutch. God deals with sin by forgiving us, and when he forgives us there is more of us, not less.” (Peterson, Tell It Slant, 186)

- (Adam acting like Jesus with my bathroom – I'm in a fix, and God steps in), fighting the effects of evil in the world until one day, He makes everything new – forgiveness is the cleanup job, it's what keeps us from continually hurting ourselves on our history with others and with God

Response: The Lord's Prayer