

Sermon Title: **Forgive Us**

Written: August 13, 2016

Preached: August 14, 2016 at Waterville FBC

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Scripture Reference: **Matthew 6:12**

Thesis: **Jesus taught us that as God forgives us in grace;**

Purpose: **We must be able to extend the same compassion to those who wrong us.**

Key Word: "Forgiveness"

Key Points: #1 We are All Born into Sin and in Need of Forgiveness
 #2 God's Forgiveness Must Be Given in Order to Obtain
 #3 God Loved us Enough to Offer Forgiveness

I) Introduction: Scripture Reading is: **Matthew 6:12**

A) The Setting:

1) **Today we are continuing our study of what we know as the Lord's Prayer.**

- (a) This is the prayer Jesus gave to His disciples as a model of how to pray.
- (b) I am beginning to feel as we work through this study that this prayer is a key that will help us unlock the door to our Master.

2) **When I began this study I have to admit that there was a little doubt that I was breaking it down too far.**

- (a) That it was going to be an oversimplification to study the words of this prayer model.
- (b) But what I have found is a rich gold mine of truth that when mined connects me in a deeper way to my Lord and my God!
- (c) I hope that you have found that to be true also.

3) **And now I believe that we have come to the heart of this prayer.**

- (a) Both in finding the joy of forgiveness for ourselves.
- (b) And in the great burden of release in forgiving others.

4) **I thought I would begin with a few illustrations of thoughts on forgiveness¹**

- (a) Bernard Meltzer was a United States radio host for several decades. His advice call-in show was called "What's Your Problem?" Meltzer said, "*When you forgive, you in no way change the past--but you sure do change the future.*"
- (b) Mark Twain had some sour thoughts about Christianity, but he had this much right: "*Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it.*"
- (c) Forgiving is hard but it is essential to spiritual and mental well-being. Noted religious author Agnes Sanford said, "*As we practice the work of forgiveness we discover more and more that forgiveness and healing are one.*"
- (d) A woman testified to the transformation in her life that had resulted through her experience in conversion. She declared, "*I'm so glad I got religion. I have an uncle I used to hate so much, I vowed I'd never go to his funeral. But now, why, I'd be happy to go to it any time.*"
- (e) George Arthur Buttrick, noted preacher of the last century, said, "*God does not wish us to remember what he is willing to forget.*"
- (f) C. S. Lewis was right when he said, "*We all agree that forgiveness is a beautiful idea until we have to practice it.*"
- (g) Sir William Temple correctly observed that "*Only one petition in the Lord's Prayer has any condition attached to it. It is the petition for forgiveness.*"

5) **After we have praised God, Our Holy Heavenly Father and acknowledged our need praying for His will and Kingdom we turned to praying for our needs.**

- (a) We have come to the one that perhaps is more important than all the rest.
- (b) Our need for God to forgive us.

6) **So, that brings us to our scripture reading for today in Matthew 6:12.**

B) Sermon Prayer

C) (The Hook)

1) **We cannot talk about forgiveness without first addressing the topic of SIN.**

- (a) No other doctrine in the Christian faith today is as under attack . . . as the doctrine of sin.
- (b) The reason . . . I believe is that no one wants to take responsibility for sin.
- 2) **One of the greatest lies promoted by Satan is that there is no sin.**
 - (a) You are not that bad; just look at what others are doing.
 - (b) How can you be accountable to God when you have little knowledge of sin?
 - (c) How can a beautiful innocent baby come into this world a sinner?
 - (d) Babies don't understand their actions and we cannot possibly hold them accountable; can we?
 - (e) Sin is just a by-product of our own insecurities fed by our guilt and paranoia.
- 3) **Many psychologists and psychiatrists today largely don't accept the premise of sin; as consider in these thoughts from an article titled, "Modern-Psychology-And-The-Bible" by Wayne Jackson)²**
 - (a) *Psychology may be defined in two very different ways — depending upon whether or not one is approaching the topic from the biblical vantage point, or from the humanistic viewpoint. The humanist, one who considers man to be the measure of all things, with no need for belief in a supreme Being, suggests that psychology is "the study of human and animal behavior."*
 - (b) *"Psychiatry," a related discipline, specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of psychological problems.*
 - (c) The term "psychology" actually derives from the Greek root, *psyche* (soul), and pertains, therefore, to a study of the soul (or spirit) of man.
 - (d) One may affirm with confidence, that no "psychological" theory can benefit man that fails to consider the "soul" aspect.
 - (e) **Modern psychology asserts that human conduct is the result of impersonal forces (environment) that have acted upon our species over eons of time.**
 - (i) We are the products of time and chance.
 - (ii) Ultimately, therefore, there is no such thing as "good" or "evil."
 - (iii) Traditional psychology is committed to "utter neutrality" in matters of morality.
- 4) **Their line of reasoning is this; if there is no sin, there is no need for forgiveness from a divine creator.**
 - (a) Since there is no need of forgiveness, there is no need for God.
 - (b) There is no moral absolute as we are only products of creation that cannot help the way we are.
 - (c) And therefore no hope for an eternal existence.
- 5) **We are just products of survival of the fittest.**
 - (a) Without a biblical world view we are destined to ultimate death and destruction with no hope beyond this moment.
 - (b) What a pitiful existence this leaves us in this life.
 - (c) It matters little what brings our end; only that when it comes, it is final.
- 6) **In contrast this leaves us with Forgiveness at the center of our prayer and central to our need before a Holy God.**
 - (a) Because this church believes in God and His redeeming Love . . .
 - (b) Therefore, we have all been given the hope of forgiveness and a bright eternal future.

TS: **So, let's begin our study with a Christian World view of 3 principles of forgiveness by admitting . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **We are All Born into Sin and in Need of Forgiveness**

- 1) **First of all, we are all born into sin and therefore in need of forgiveness.**
 - (a) Paul told the Roman church, **"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)**
 - (b) Psalm 51:5 says, **"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me."**

- 2) **It is all a matter of staying in the will of God.**
 - (a) There is never a time when we do not stand in need of God's forgiveness in some way.
 - (b) We already talked about God's Holiness and the need to be Holy, sanctified for divine use.
 - (c) For unless we can stay in the perfect will of God for us at every moment or every day then we commit sin.
 - (d) For sin is anything contrary to the will and character of God.
- 3) **Therefore, central to our walk with God is our need to regularly include in our prayers our need for forgiveness.**
 - (a) John wrote in his first letter **1 John 1:8&10** that, "**8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word is not in us....**"
 - (b) But the good news is sandwiched in between 8 and 10 in verse 9, "**9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**"
- 4) **There is an answer for the need of forgiveness because the bible teaches the penalty of not being perfect before God.**
 - (a) Paul also wrote in his letter to the Roman Church "**For the wages of sin is death;**"
 - (b) The good news in the last half of that verse, "**but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**" (**Romans 6:23**)
- 5) **Jesus came to settle our accounts and make it possible for us to be perfect before God.**
 - (a) We must believe that He is the Son of God and be willing to ask Him to be the Lord of our life.
 - (b) When we do this; God sends His Holy Spirit to reside inside of us and begins the process of transforming us into new perfect creations in Jesus Christ.
 - (c) This doesn't mean we are made perfect; but that when God looks at us we are made perfect because God sees us as we will become when we join Him in heaven.

TS: **While we want to be forgiven, Jesus taught that if we want to be forgiven . . .**

- B) Key Point #2: **God's Forgiveness Must Be Given in Order to Obtain**
 - 1) **Illustration: General Oglethorpe Admits Unforgiveness to John Wesley**³
 - (a) In **Matthew 6:15** (NIV) Jesus further taught, "**But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**"
 - (b) In response to this General Oglethorpe once said to John Wesley, "*I never forgive and I never forget.*"
 - (c) To which Wesley responded, "**Then Sir, I hope you never sin.**"
 - 2) Jesus taught this law stating further in **Matthew 6:14-15** (NKJV) "**For if you forgive men their trespasses (debts, sins), your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**"
 - 3) **This teaches us that only to the extent that we are willing to forgive others will we find forgiveness.**
 - (a) To make this even clearer, Jesus is quoted in **Matthew 7:2** (NIV), "**For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.**"
 - (b) God holds us accountable for our judgments of others; for it is not our place to judge.
 - 4) **How many times are we to forgive those who wrong us?**
 - (a) This is a question posed by the Apostle Peter in **Matthew 18:21-22**, "**Then Peter came and said to Him, '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.'**

- (b) Peter thought he was being pretty patient with someone who continues to sin against him offering up 7 times.
- (c) Most people I know may offer a 3 strikes and you are out philosophy.
- (d) But for those of you who are quick with the math the answer is not 490 times either.
- (e) Jesus was saying we are to forgive as many times as asked.

TS: **This is good news for us and leads us to our final principle . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **God Loved us Enough to Offer Forgiveness**

- 1) This is the good news of the Gospel message,
 - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* 17 *"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18" "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."* John 3:16-18.
- 2) God knew that we could not earn the forgiveness required to be reconciled to Him.
 - (a) But because Jesus took our punishment for sin upon Himself;
 - (b) We have been freed; we have been made right before God.
 - (c) We can now be restored to the relationship God desired for us when He made Adam and Eve in the garden.

TS: **So, what are the lessons we have learned here?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

- A) **We are all in need of forgiveness and God has made a way for us to find forgiveness through His Son, Jesus.**
 - 1) But we must give ourselves over to God and allow Him to make the necessary changes so that we are able to forgive others.
 - 2) We cannot do this in our own strength.
 - 3) There are just too many egregious acts for which we cannot find it in our hearts to forgive and forget.
- B) **Unless we are able to give it to God and allow Him to be the judge.**
 - 1) How do we forgive those who have wronged us?
 - 2) We begin by praying for them and praying for God to help us forgive them.
 - 3) **Next we mouth the words, even though we don't yet feel them in our heart.**
 - (a) In Christ, as He will help me, *"I forgive you."*
 - (b) Saying the words is important.
- C) **You may not feel like you can forgive in the beginning;**
 - 1) But with the help of Jesus and His Holy Spirit living in you; God will help you to give up the bitterness and hurt.
 - 2) Then we put it in His hands and let Him lift the burdens.
- D) **This is the place where real healing happens.**
 - 1) After all, the closer we come to God the more we understand the depth of His forgiveness for ourselves.
 - 2) God so LOVED you and me, that He gave His one and only Son that we might find forgiveness.
- E) **But we have to be willing to accept it; let me illustrate:**
 - 1) A pastor told the true story of one of his church members, an attorney, who after meditating on several scriptures, decided to cancel the debts of all his clients that had owed him money for more than 6 months.
 - 2) He drafted a letter explaining his decision and its biblical basis and sent 17 debt canceling letters via certified mail.
 - 3) **One by one, the letters began to return, unsigned and undelivered.**
 - (a) Perhaps a couple people had moved away though not likely.

- (b) For 16 of the 17 letters came back to him because the clients refused to sign for and open the envelopes fearing that this attorney was suing them for their debts.
- 4) **How profound!**
- (a) We owe a debt for our sin and God is willing to cancel it.
- (b) But too many people will not even open the letter contain in His Word that explains it.
- F) **Pastor Timothy Peck wrote,**
- 1) **Forgiveness does not mean we minimize the evil in sins against us.**⁴
 - 2) **Forgiveness is also not incompatible with justice.**
 - (a) When we forgive, we release people into the hands of God for him to deal with them.
 - (b) We know that as wounded people, our thoughts about justice are probably clouded and unclear.
 - (c) So we trust them into the hands of the perfect judge, the creator of heaven and earth and source of every good gift.
 - 3) **We know that people's sins set into motion certain consequences that no one can stop.**
 - (a) Our forgiveness means we choose to absorb the effects of their sin against us in our lives, **but it doesn't mean those consequences are stopped.**
 - (b) They will still have to deal with broken trust with people,
 - (c) And perhaps life changing circumstances due to their sin.
 - (d) All we can do is not hold it over their head anymore.
 - 4) **Finally, forgiveness is not a way to earn our forgiveness before God.**
 - (a) Forgiveness is not a meritorious work where we somehow earn brownie points before God.
 - (b) Instead it is something that grows out of our own experience with God's grace as it flows out of our lives and onto other people.
 - 5) **Forgiveness is an important part of prayer, both receiving forgiveness and extending it to others.**
 - (a) In prayer we both receive the experience of forgiveness and we express our forgiveness of those who hurt us.
 - (b) To pray, "**Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors**" is a radical, radical prayer.
 - 6) **And remember what Jesus said as He hung on the cross.**
 - (a) After the beatings, the nails, the mocking Jesus said,
 - (b) "**Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.**" (Luke 23:34)
 - 7) **Have you experienced God's forgiveness?**
 - (a) You can before you leave here today.
 - (b) Let God lift your burden as He makes you more like Him.
 - (c) Only then can you experience the radical power of forgiveness in God's Love.

IV) Invitation: **Let us pray.**

V) **Bibliography**

¹ Thoughts on Forgiveness, sermoncentral.com, shared by staff writers, January 2009

² Quote from (Liebman, Joshua. 1946. *Peace of Mind*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. 180-81), <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/469-modern-psychology-and-the-bible>, (Article by Wayne Jackson)

³ From a sermon by Davon Huss, The Spite House, sermoncentral.com, 11/23/2009

⁴ Forgiveness In Prayer by Timothy Peck, sermoncentral.com, September 2001