

# Forgiveness

May 19, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled Forgiveness. Thank you to Ed, Rhonda, Barbara, and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Ephesians 4, 29 to 32.

Happy birthday to Stephen, Sofia, Seth, and Barbara.

## Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Good morning, everybody. It's good to have you here today. You know, it would be really interesting if we could say, "All right, what happened in the last week?" I think we would find some really interesting comments of people who have been somewhere and experienced something that was really positive, some stuff that was maybe hurtful, and so forth, but we're here today to gather around the Word of God and to worship together and to sort of reset ourselves for another adventure in our lives. So welcome, and glad everyone's here.

A few birthdays this week, Ruth and Mary and Dorothy are having birthdays this week, and if you have an opportunity to interact with these folks, that would be terrific.

If you have any spare medical adaptive materials, please see Barbara as her daughter is in need of them. Prayer requests, we got a note from Tim and Care who are presently living in Waterloo.

Thank you for your flowers that have brightened the day. Our hearts are full this weekend as we are grateful for the time given us to celebrate marriage of our daughter. That's pretty cool. Blessings to all. Love, Tim and Care.

And John M., who worships at Tintern, used to worship here, is recovering at home after a lengthy hospital stay in relationship to a kidney infection. So if you know John, you can reach out to him and certainly be praying for him.

I've been thinking about church lately. We come and we spend an hour or two a week together, and then the church leaves the building, and we become the church in our communities. What an awesome responsibility that is. For me, I spent a couple of days this week at Great Lakes. I spent some time yesterday at a memorial service for a cousin who passed away not too long ago in November. And we had a great experience with our granddaughter staying with us for the week. All good. All good stuff. And all kinds of situations where you can breathe into people and you can help them and you can listen to their heart and be helpful. So we're gathering as the church, and that's good because we can praise God together. We can sing together. We can pray together. We can have communion together. And then we leave the building to be the church outside of the building. Let's pray.

Our Father in Heaven, we are grateful for this opportunity to be together. We're grateful for each other, for the faith that we see in each other and each other's lives. And we pray, Father, that we might be people who take your message with us each day of our lives and as we interact with

people that they might know and then understand and be led to your spirit and to the salvation that you offer.

We pray, Father, that you'll put doors in front of us that we have to open and prayerfully go through, sometimes in situations where we're uncomfortable, but that you'll be with us and guide us. We're thankful for each other. We're thankful for you and for your son, Jesus, that we come to celebrate today in communion.

And we pray, Father, that what we do will help us to be your hands and feet, your words and your ears as we interact with our community around us. And to this end, we give you praise and honor and we give you thanks, in Jesus' name, amen.

## Communion

Good morning. I'm sure many of you remember the story of the children of Israel who were in the wilderness. And you remember how Moses got water from a rock? And you remember how man arraigned from heaven to feed the people? The people's physical hunger and thirst were satisfied. John 6.35, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never be hungry. Those who trust in, rely on, and cling to me will never be thirsty." Then he goes on to say, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If you eat that bread, you will live forever. The bread that I will give you is my flesh, which I give so the world may live. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood will live in me and die in them." The Israelites were given physical food and physical water, but we are given spiritual food and spiritual water.

There are two kinds of believers in Christ. There are professing believers, and there are possessing believers. A professing believer will say, "Yeah, I believe there's something beyond us, or I believe that there's a God." A possessing believer is a person who possesses Christ, just like the bread of life and the thirst. We have a lamp in our living room, and it's got a red shade on it, and it's plugged in, and it sits there, and it's a lamp with a red shade on it. But then, every so often, it gets turned on, and then it's bright. I think a professing believer is like that red lamp, but a possessing believer is a believer who has the spirit of God living in them, and God possesses them, and then they glow, just like our light glows.

Galatians 2 and 20, Paul says, "My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Spiritually speaking, Paul's old self was put to death with Christ on the cross. The life he leads now is one guided by Christ living in him, by his spirit. So Paul says, "He is now free to live for God." The liberty Paul enjoys in Christ is first and foremost a freedom to serve God unconstrained by tradition, custom, legal restrictions. Nothing stands in his way, not food, not time, not association. He is free to serve Christ, not in sin, but in joy. The cross of Christ is not only where Christ died, it is where we can die. We can be buried with Christ. We can live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. We can be professing believers, but we can be much more. We can be possessing believers. And let us pray based on that.

God, we want to continually trust in, rely on, and cling to you no matter what our circumstances. May we be a people who are willing to pick up our crosses and follow you. May our every mode of word and action be guided by your spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Reading

### Ephesians 4:29-32

The reading this morning is Ephesians chapter 4 verses 29 through to the end of 32.

Do not let unwholesomeness talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, for whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as Christ God forgave you.

## Sermon

### Forgiveness

Good morning, everyone. Really appreciate you being with us this morning. Some of us are old enough that we remember in school, when we first would get to school, we would be singing, God save the queen. And if you're old enough, God save the king. But we also recite the Lord's Prayer. And I'm wondering if you're willing, if you would just stand with me, put ourselves back in those early shoes, and let's go ahead and recite the Lord's Prayer. Let's say it together.

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, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Thank you very much. Forgiveness. It's powerful. Forgiveness is part of God himself. And the scripture says on many occasions that God delights to forgive. And I want to spend some time talking about that today, talking about forgiveness. And it's Old Testament and New Testament alike.

If you have a Bible, you may want to look at this. It's way back in the Old Testament, 1 Kings chapter 8, starting in verse 30. And here's the story of Solomon and preparing the dedication of the temple, Solomon's Prayer, if you will. It's pretty lengthy, but it's really, really good. 1 Kings chapter 8, starting in around verse 30. He says, "Here the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place, hear from heaven your dwelling place, and when you are here, forgive. When a man wrongs his neighbor and is required to take an oath and comes and squares the oath before to that altar, then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has not done, declare the innocent not guilty, so establish his innocence." I was thinking about that early this morning. Imagine talking to God this way, very forceful, putting it out there. And God, almost, he's saying, I demand you forgive me, because you are a forgiving God.

Verse 33, "When your people Israel have been defeated by the enemy, because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them back to the land that you have given." Verse 35, "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive."

Forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live and to send rain on the land. And you gave your people an inheritance. And when famine or plague comes to the end, or blight, or mildew, locusts, grasshoppers, or when an enemy besieges them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, and when prayer or plea is made by any of your people Israel, each one aware of the afflictions of his own heart, and spreading out his hands toward the temple, and hear, then hear from the dwelling place, forgive and act, all the way through Kings, and when Solomon, who is magnificently wealthy, given it to him by God, but he dedicated himself to God himself.

All throughout the scriptures, forgiveness is amazing. Verse Kings chapter 8, in verse 50, "And forgive your people who have sinned against you. Forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy. For they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out over Egypt." In many ways, I think of this as parents with children, who sometimes are exasperated, sometimes they say nasty things, sometimes they may do nasty things, but then it doesn't take long before forgiveness comes. Even children who cry, because they know they've made mistakes, they've said things that they haven't said.

Forgiveness, I think it's one of the great, beautiful understandings of scripture with forgiveness. In Acts chapter 5, 17 through 32, Acts chapter 5, beginning in verse 17, it says this, "Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.

They arrested the apostles and turned them to the public jail. And during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out, and go and stand in the temple courts, and said, tell the people the full message of the new life. Then at daybreak, they entered the temple, the courts, as they'd been told. And then it says, "And when the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin, the full assembly of the elders of Israel, and sent them to the jail for the apostles. But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, we found the jail securely locked, with guards standing at the doors. But when we opened them, we found no one inside. On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard, and the chief priests were puzzled, wondering what would come of this. Then someone came and said, look, the men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts, teaching the people. At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. Having brought the apostles, they made them aware about the Sanhedrin, the question of the high priest. We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.

Peter and the other apostles replied, we must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. But God exalted him to his own right hand, as prince and savior, that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given us.

It's precious going through these scriptures, noticing how often forgiveness is mentioned. And it's powerful. Some of us remember times in our own life when we needed forgiveness. And there are other times when people have maybe done some not very nice things to us. And they come to us, and they ask, I'm so sorry. Will you forgive me? Well, will you? It's one thing to ask for forgiveness. Are you willing to give forgiveness? It's true for all of us. The scriptures are absolutely full, talking about forgiveness. And maybe being bold in saying this, if we do not forgive, if we do not forgive, will God forgive us?

Many years ago, there was a horrible situation that took place in where Barb and I used to live. A police officer was murdered. He was killed. And the person that killed him was a member of our church. And it was the most horrendous of things. And the relative of the man who was killed came to the funeral. I was doing the funeral. What do I say? And the gentleman who's part of the family of one who was killed stood up in front of the entire church and said, I forgive you. I forgive this man who did this. It was remarkable.

And that was unique, that before this man died, I went to the hospital. Doctor said, he can't hear you. He can't hear you at all. He won't know. He's going to pass anytime soon. He won't hear you. And I knew this man very well. And as he was in bed, I walked into the room. And there was a window, and the window was full of police officers. If they could get their hands on that man who was unconscious, they would. But I came to the bed. The doctor said, he won't hear you. He can't hear anything. And so I whispered to him. I put my arms around him. I remember it to this very day. And I said, I mentioned his name. I said, God forgives us all. This man used to preach in the congregation. He made a horrible mistake. He killed another person. I whispered to him. Doctors told me he can't hear anything. He started to cry. Yes, he was aware of what he did. He started to cry. The doctors were wrong. They heard me. They heard him. We talked. The amazing part was, at the funeral, all the people that were involved forgave him. Each person who stood up in front of the congregation said, we know this. He was not this way. He faltered. He sinned greatly. He took another man's life. I forgive him.

It's powerful. When we read through scripture, forgiveness is used so often. But it may not mean too much. Oh, yeah, it's important to forgive. But when you're really in a situation where you need forgiveness desperately, there is someone whose arms are always around you who will forgive you. It's our Father. It's our Savior. It's our Holy Spirit. And we have the ability to allow God forgiveness. It is a precious, precious promise.

So for the remainder of my time, it's a brief message. I know it's not something that I would normally preach. I want to just take a look at a couple of scriptures that talk about forgiveness. And it talks about it over and over and over and over again. And maybe you're here today, I don't know, where deep down inside, you know you need forgiveness so badly. Maybe there's been something happening in your life or something that you've said or something that you've done. And it just rips you apart. This is for all of us. Forgiveness is part of the Lord's Prayer. It's beautiful.

One of the greatest gifts that we can give is forgiveness. Way back in Psalms, chapter 19, the second part of verse 12 says, "Forgive my hidden faults. Someone else may not know what you've done or said, but forgive my faults." Psalm 25, "For the sake of your name, O Lord, forgive my sin." And then Psalm 65, "When we are overwhelmed by sins, you forgave my sin." Psalm 79, "Help us, O God, your Savior, for the glory of your name. Deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake." Forgiveness is everywhere.

Back in the Old Testament, in 1 Kings 8, you may want to read this with me, 1 Kings 8, 30 through 50, here are these words. It's just repeated over and over and over again. Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive. When a man wrongs his neighbor and is required to take an oath, he comes and swears to the oath before your altar in this temple, then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent, not guilty, so as to establish his innocence.

And then in verse 33, "When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them back to the land of your forefathers. And when the heavens are shut up and there's no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live. Send rain on the land that you gave your people and inheritance. When famine or plague comes into the land or blight or mildew or locust or grasshoppers or when any enemy besieges them in their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, and when prayer or plea is made by your people Israel, each one aware of the afflictions of his own heart and spreading out his hands toward heaven, your dwelling place, forgive and act." Forgiveness is everywhere. It's a restart. It's a starting over. All the way through in Kings when Solomon is building this magnificent temple, there wasn't a day go by where there wasn't an asking of forgiveness. Verse 50 of 1 Kings 8, "And forgive your people who have sinned against you. And of all the offenses that they have committed against you and caused their conquerors to show them mercy. For they are your people and your inheritance because you brought them out of Egypt." So lovely, so wonderful, so powerful, and yet so difficult.

Jesus. In the first century church, when the church really started preaching, there was forgiveness of sins. At Pentecost, Peter preached, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." Psalm 19, "Forgive my hidden faults." Psalm 25, "For the sake of your name, forgive my sins." Then at Pentecost, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promises for you and your children and for all who are far off.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, he gave them good advice on Christian living and a big part of it was forgiveness. Colossians 2, "Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead, when you were dead in your own sins, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins." All our sins.

I remember, probably you would remember many, many times, maybe because of my occupation. People come in and they want to confess something, share something and then they'll say something like this. Would you forgive me? And I'll respond by saying, you don't have to ask forgiveness for me. Ask the Father, ask the Son, ask the Holy Spirit. One of the most difficult things, maybe it's because of pride, maybe one of the difficult things that we could ever do is ask for forgiveness. But it's the best thing we could ever do. People who are sometimes sworn enemies have come together, asked for forgiveness, put their arms around each other and say, "I love you." We went from antagonism to blessings. And because of Jesus, we've done the same. The simple thing of baptism, going down into the water, coming out of the water, it's all about forgiveness. It's about a new start, a new beginning. One of the great, great things about God, and there's so many great things, is God delights to forgive. May we do the same. Amen.

## Closing

Certainly, what a blessing to be together today. Don, for your message and forgiveness, thank you for your words and for your courage to say recall that story. That was amazing. And for Adam leading the children today, what a blessing that is. To have him lead the kids and the kids be so excited about singing those songs and for the words of those songs that can uplift us as adults.

I was thinking during the sermon that yes, we ask the Lord for forgiveness, but part of that process is learning to forgive ourselves. That something in the past or something we have done to be able to get past it, to feel forgiven, to forgive ourselves, to learn from that experience and be committed to move on in a better way. So may God bless us as we try to forgive ourselves.

We're going to sing a song in a minute, "Blessed be the tie that binds." And I think it's been chosen because it applies to the lesson that we've had today. It's about community. This is a song that was sung when Rhonda and I were married. And look at the pronouns in it. The we, our, it's about community. It's about relationships. It's about getting past grievances and difficulties and having a mutual love and respect and care for one another. Very powerful song. Let's pray and then we'll sing this song in conclusion.

Our Father in heaven, we are thankful so, so amazingly thankful for your forgiveness. We pray, Father, that in that process of being forgiven that we might understand our role in needing that forgiveness and also our role to forgive ourselves and to move on in the glow of your gracious forgiveness and love for us.

We're thankful for Jesus that makes this process possible and that makes it possible for us to live eternally with you because you forgive us and care for us. And we pray, Father, for hearts that are willing to give forgiveness to those around us and for behaviors and things that we find difficult. Help us in this way. We pray, Father, that we might be a community that's blessed by the tie that binds us together in Christian love. And as we sing these words at this time, that we might be lifted up to be your people in our communities and our church community and in our homes. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.

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