



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

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Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

After the Storm: Forgiveness and boundaries (Luke 23:32-43)

Forgiveness is at the heart of Christianity and is an important theme in the Gospel of Luke, in particular. In this passage we have the famous line, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is a statement that is unique to Luke's story, and it is emblematic of Jesus' entire ministry. Those words of forgiveness were on his lips as he breathed his last and are fitting.

Looking backward and forward you see that forgiveness is a part of the message. Even before Jesus was born, John the Baptist was preaching about forgiveness. After the resurrection, Jesus' last command before his ascension is for the disciples to bring the word of forgiveness to the world.

Forgiveness is an integral part of the Kingdom of God. That Jesus himself forgave others was a part of why he was even on the Cross. The tensions between him and the religious leadership began when Jesus started to forgive sins. In chapters five and seven, Jesus heals someone in front of the religious leadership. They are not upset with his healing, but they grumble when he claims to forgive their sins.

In the prayer Jesus taught us, our own forgiveness seems linked to the forgiveness we offer to others (that was always my least favorite part of the Lord's Prayer). Forgiveness, both receiving and offering, is an important part of the Christian faith.

Modern psychologists and social scientists agree. Forgiveness is an important part of a healthy life. Many studies have been done to show that forgiveness leads to greater health outcomes—both physical and mental. Forgiveness is an act of tearing down boundaries. Sin can be seen as something that destroys relationship. It puts obstacles between people and between people and God. Forgiveness is the act of tearing down those obstacles and restoring right relationship. Forgiveness is the path toward shalom.

God's shalom is the origin of all creation. Shalom has been lost, but restoring Shalom is the purpose of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection.

Yet rushing into forgiveness is not true forgiveness. One cannot get to forgiveness without first processing pain, experi-

encing anger, and allowing time and space for forgiveness to take root. Forgiveness cannot be forced upon anyone. Forgiveness is not the same as acting nice for propriety's sake. Forgiveness is not about making everyone get along so that we can have a picture of a happy family for the Christmas card.

Forgiveness is about returning to yourself. It is about getting past barriers of pain, fear, resentment. Forgiveness restores our hearts, but it does not always lead to restored relationship. Jesus forgave those that mocked him while he was on the Cross, but when he came back on Sunday morning, he didn't hang out with them. He broke bread with his disciples in Emmaus, not with the leaders and soldiers who mocked him. He forgave those who hurt him, but he didn't come back to them.

Reconciliation is God's ultimate will for all relationships, but on this side of eternity, it is not always possible. Sometimes in order to protect our own shalom, relationships must end. Boundaries are an important part of self care and self love. God wills shalom in your life, and that might mean firm boundaries with some relationships. It means forgiveness, but it doesn't always mean reconciliation.

