

## As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

3-17-2013

Matthew 6: 5-15

*5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ' 14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

Today is our fifth Sunday of Lent and the theme for today is forgiveness. Richard read this line in his Lenten Call to Worship; We light this candle as a symbol of our faith in Jesus Christ to help us to forgive as we are forgiven, to help us love as we are loved. Forgiveness; such a simple thing to say, such a complex thing to accomplish. Who do we forgive? What do we forgive? How do we forgive?

We've all been hurt in some way or another by something someone said or something someone did. What do we do with the hurt? How do we deal with it? Do we just bury it; pretend it doesn't exist? Do we hold a grudge? Do we plot revenge? Boy, you just wait; one day I'll get my chance, and when that day rolls around, you're in for it. Don't we enjoy those little scenarios? How is that working out for you? But what did Christ tell us to do? As a Christian, Christ isn't giving us an option. Christ told us to forgive. Let it go, pardon the person.

To me one of the greatest examples of forgiveness in the Bible is the story of Paul. Paul, rather Saul as he was originally called before his conversion, was a pretty despicable person. He was a devout Jew and very well educated. Saul was actually a Pharisee. As such, he was engaged in the violent persecution of the newly-forming Church and of those persons who professed a belief in Jesus Christ. He moved about the countryside persecuting early Christians. While on the way to Damascus, he was confronted by the resurrected Jesus and struck blind. Through this experience, Saul was converted to Christianity and became one of the strongest Christian influences of his era. He is credited by some to have written as many as thirteen of the books of the New Testament. For all he had done to persecute Christians, Jesus forgave him and helped Paul become a strong Christian. Jesus used Paul to spread the good news of a new covenant through Jesus Christ.

Each Sunday at the end of my Morning Prayer, we, as a congregation recite the Lord's Prayer. As seen from our scripture this morning, we now know where that prayer comes from. The key phrase I want to talk about in the prayer comes from verse twelve of today's scripture: **<sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.** Now, whether you use the word debt or use the word trespass is usually determined by what denomination you are. It really makes no difference which word you use, what you are really talking about is sin. And forgive us of our debts, or forgive us of our trespasses, what you are saying is, and forgive us of our sins. What we tend to go past without thinking about is the next phrase, as we forgive those who trespass against us, or another way of saying it, as we forgive those who sin against us. Let's say those two phrases in language we understand today: God, I want you to forgive me of my sins, just like I forgive those who sin against me. Are you sure that's what you really want to pray to God; God, I want you to forgive me of my sins, just like I forgive those who sin against me. Does that mean if we don't forgive, then we're telling God it's alright if He doesn't forgive us? Puts things in a new light doesn't it. Most of us don't remember verses fourteen and fifteen: **<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.** Verse fifteen is kind of scary: **<sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not**

**forgive your sins.** Wow, that's blunt. If you don't forgive people, God will not forgive you. Jesus tells us all right there that we are to forgive.

I asked three very simple little questions earlier in the sermon; do you remember what they were? First question: Who do we forgive? The answer to that one is easy; everyone. Really, that is who we are to forgive. It doesn't make any difference who they are or what they have done or as the case may be, not done, we are to forgive them. Forgive everyone; man, woman, adult, child, people at work, people in the church, friends, neighbors, people of different religions, people of different ethnicities; I think you get the idea. That leads to the second question, what do we forgive? What do we let go of and what do we hold on to? Do we only forgive the little stuff and hang on to the big stuff, or do we forgive the big things and hang on to the little ones? What do we forgive? This morning we watched a video named "Forgiveness". It was written and performed by a young man named Matthew West. There is a story behind this video that probably explains things better than I ever could. Let's watch the story behind the video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wz3tkHv5sbg>

Now, back to the questions: who do you forgive, everyone. What do you forgive, everything. The lady in the video, Renee, forgave the man who took the life of her daughter. It was a perfect example of what you forgive. I couldn't help but identify with Matthew West when he said in the story video that he didn't know if he could have done what Renee did. I wondered that same thing. Do I have that much forgiveness in me? Do you have that much in you?

That leads us to the third question I asked, How do you forgive. You forgive through God. This story is the perfect example of how you forgive. A drunk driver killed Renee's daughter. The young man went to prison for twenty-two years, yet, Renee was the one in prison. She was angry. She was bitter. She was consumed by hatred. She was in the darkest place she had ever been. Renee started going around to schools and churches and giving talks on the evils of drunk driving. My favorite line in this story is, and I quote: "As the years progressed, she felt like something was missing from her presentations and that's when God put it on her heart that she had not forgiven this man who took the life of her daughter." Let me repeat that, God put it on her heart that she had not forgiven this man who took the life of her daughter. And there is the answer to the third question, how do we forgive, We turn it over to God. Through God you can forgive anyone of anything. Through God you can let go of the fear, the bitterness, the hatred, the anger. Through God you can come out of the darkness into the light. Turn it over to God. Jesus Christ went to the cross so that each of us might be forgiven of our sins. All we have to do is believe and through Jesus Christ all of our sins are forgiven. We don't have to hold on to them. We can let them go. Christ has forgiven us.

Christ did that for us and has told us to do the same for our fellow man, forgive them. Forgiveness will let you out of your prison. It will clear your head and your heart. Listen to the following verses: from Ephesians 4:32, **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.** Just as in Christ God forgave you.

And from Colossians 3:13, **Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And that leads us right back to the prayer we pray each Sunday morning:

**And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.** Christ forgave you; can you forgive your fellow man?

Amen

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As a side note before our closing hymn: There is a second part of that video. If you will notice, there are three YouTube video links in the bulletin. The first is the video of the song we saw today, the next two are of the story behind the song.

Video Links:

*Forgiveness* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VquoupNiypl>

The Story Behind the Song – Part 1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wz3tkHv5sbg>

The Story Behind the Song – Part 2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18SzbjJgaE>