

SERIES: RELATIONSHIPS
SERMON: THE MARK OF FORGIVENESS
3-5-23

OPENER:

Forgiveness is one of the most powerful responses that we could ever have, yet the steps in forgiving others may be difficult. Forgiving others is very hard. The love of Christ is the only way we can set free those who have deeply wounded us. The love of Christ gives us the only context we have for believing God has forgiven us.

There is perhaps no greater gift you can offer God than a heart that knows the power of forgiveness and decides to set others free. Forgiving shows that the love, grace, and mercy of Jesus are operating in our lives.

Is there someone who has offended you? Are you able to release the person in forgiveness? God gives us divine power to forgive. We who have received the freedom of forgiveness have the power to set one another free. This is a power that truly sets the captive free and can affect the whole world. Forgiveness defeats darkness on a massive scale because it involves the resurrection power of Jesus. Nothing can defeat the greatness and glory there is in *one act of forgiveness*.

STORY:

The need for forgiveness can be seen in a story of a father and his son in Spain. They had become angry and bitter toward one another. The son finally left home and ran away. His father began to search for him but was unable to find him anywhere. After months of frantically searching, the father came to the end of his resources and sat down sadly in a coffee shop. Suddenly he had an idea!

He put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad said something like this: *“Dear Paco, meet me in front of the men’s clothes shop at 2 p.m. on Friday. You are forgiven. I love you. Your father.”* On Friday at 2 p.m., eight hundred Pacos showed up! They were all looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers. How important it is that we seek forgiveness and offer forgiveness to one another. It is critical to our lives in every dimension—spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally.

Would you like to see the Lord shatter the spiritual prisons in your life, the areas where you feel trapped? Then forgive those who put you there, for surely the walls of your imprisonment are made of your own anger and unforgiveness toward others.

OPENER #2:

Luke 24:36-40 (ESV) ³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷ But they were startled

and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

.....John 20:24-27 (NLT) One of the twelve disciples, Thomas, was not with the others when Jesus came. ²⁵ They told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”

²⁶ Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!”

We know a few details about Jesus’s resurrected body.....

- > It was the same body in which he died, and yet it was not only restored to life but changed. He was still human, but now glorified.
- > He could pass through doors and walls, yet eat solid food.
- > His “natural body,” which died on the cross, was raised and transformed into a “spiritual body”.
- > His body was new enough that those who knew him best didn’t recognize him at first, but also, soon enough knew it was indeed Him.

TREASURE IN THE SCARS

Among the fascinating few details we have, one of the most interesting is his scars. The scars were the main way he confirmed to his disciples that it was truly Him.

If Luke and John didn’t tell us about the scars, we would assume that Jesus’ glorified, resurrected body wouldn’t have any. Because scars seem like a surprising feature of a perfected, new eternal world.

**THAT LUKE AND JOHN TESTIFY SO PLAINLY TO JESUS’ RESURRECTION
SCARS MUST MEAN THEY
ARE NOT A DEFECT, BUT A GLORY.**

WHAT DO WE SEE IN HIS SCARS?

FIRST: JESUS’ SCARS TELLS US THAT HE KNOWS OUR PAIN

Hebrews 2:17-18 ¹⁷ Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

He became fully human, made like us in every way. He became one of us, he could suffer with us, and for us, as he carried our sins to die in our place.

SECOND: JESUS SCARS TELL US OF HIS LOVE

Romans 5:8 (NLT) But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

THIRD: JESUS' SCARS FOREVER TELL US OF OUR VICTORY IN HIM

Revelation 5: 2-6 (NIV) Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

Note:

From this first introduction as "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" Jesus is referred to 27 more times as "the Lamb." Heaven's worshipers fall down before him, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb *who was slain!*"

**FAR FROM FORGETTING HIS SUFFERING,
WE WILL WORSHIP JESUS FOREVER WITH THE BEAUTY
OF HIS SCARS IN VIEW.
THEY ARE NO DEFECT, BUT A GLORY TO US WHO
HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN.**

**WE WILL CELEBRATE THE "LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN",
THE "SHEEP WITH THE SCARS" IN WHOSE BLOOD
WE HAVE BEEN WASHED.**

**THE TREASURE THAT AWAITS US FOR ALL ETERNITY IS THE VISIBLE,
GLORIOUS SCARS OF JESUS!**

SCARS TELL A STORY

We might think that the Father should have chosen to remove the scars from his Son's eternal glorified flesh, but scars were God's idea to begin with. He made human skin to heal like this from significant injury. Some of our scars carry little meaning, but some have a lot to say, whether to our shame or to our glory, depending on the injury.

PERSONAL ILLUSTRATION:

Many of us have scars we wish would disappear. I have a scar on my right hand that I got very young. I have a scar that I got from surgery when I was 8 years old.

And I, like many of you, have scars that are invisible to the eye. They are from wounds in our heart that reach deep within our past, that others do not see.

**OUR SCARS TELL A STORY.
OUR SCARS TELL THE STORY THAT WE'VE STRUGGLED WITH PAIN, WITH SIN,
WITH HARDSHIP BUT THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD WE PUSHED THROUGH.**

**AND WE DID MORE THAN SURVIVE.
WE EXPERIENCED GOD'S HEALING, HIS POWER
AND HIS VICTORY.**

THE SCARS OF JESUS TELL US THE STORY OF HIS FORGIVENESS.

It's as if JESUS is saying "Look at my hands, my feet, and my side. I know pain and sorrow. But through all of it, I came out victorious, and you can too."

**JESUS' SCARS SHOW US WHAT TRUE
FORGIVENESS LOOKS LIKE.**

**DO WE BEAR THE MARK OF FORGIVENESS?
DO OUR OWN SCARS BEAR WITNESS TO OTHERS THAT WE HAVE BEEN
FORGIVEN AND THEY CAN BE FORGIVEN TOO?**

**THE SUFFERING AND PAIN THAT WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH SHOULD HELP US
TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS' PAIN THEIR FAILURES, THEIR TEMPTATIONS JUST
LIKE JESUS UNDERSTANDS OURS.**

**OUR OWN SCARS SHOULD BE A REMINDER TO FORGIVE.
AND LIKE JESUS WE SHOULD REALIZE WE ARE JUST LIKE THOSE WHO HAVE
WRONGED US.
WE HAVE SINNED TOO, WE HAVE HURT OTHERS, AND WE BEAR THE MARK OF
THE LORD'S FORGIVENESS.
HIS MARK OF HEALING AND HOPE.**

**AND THEY CAN BE HEALED AND FORGIVEN TOO
THROUGH JESUS.**

Forgiveness is critical. To gain a better understanding of why, I think it's important to remind ourselves what the Bible has say about forgiveness.....

1. ALL OF US ARE IN NEED OF FORGIVENESS

Romans 3:23 (NIV) For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

We were all born with a sin problem, eternally separated from God. We'd be lost forever without Him intervening and offering us forgiveness. I often think about

how many times I've messed up. Each and every time, God is there with open arms to offer forgiveness.

2. FORGIVING OTHER IS ESSENTIAL FOR OUR OWN FORGIVENESS

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

This is a difficult verse to process. God stands ready and willing to forgive us, but asks that we extend the same forgiveness to others first. If we have resentment and bitterness in our hearts, it's time to give it over to God. Let Him heal us and give us the ability to forgive. Our eternity is dependent on it.

3. LACK OF FORGIVENESS BREAKS OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Matthew 5:23-24 (NLT) "So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

The Bible is very clear that harboring bitterness in our hearts is sin. And, if we aren't actively seeking to kill it, it will break our fellowship with God. We won't experience everything God has to offer us.

4. WE OWE FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO DON'T DESERVE IT

Acts 7:59-60 (NLT) As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died.

Every time I find myself having trouble extending forgiveness to someone I think is undeserving, I think about how unworthy I am of forgiveness. Yet, God saw fit to love me and forgive me. When considering the magnitude of that, every situation in my life where I was reluctant to forgive seems trivial.

5. WE OWE OTHERS AN UNLIMITED AMOUNT OF FORGIVENESS

Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT) Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" ²² "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

Jesus is clear in this passage that there is no "final straw" that warrants us withholding our forgiveness. God doesn't have a "final straw" for us.

6. THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES FOR CHOOSING NOT TO FORGIVE

Matthew 18:34-35 (NLT) Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

³⁵ "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart

God takes forgiveness seriously, and this parable is proof. If we don't forgive others, there are eternal consequences! That's a scary thing, and it challenges me to evaluate my own heart. "

CLOSING:

If you've experienced healing it means your wounds have been healed. There may be a scar from the injury, but it doesn't hurt anymore. If you have experienced the merciful healing of God, then you should have an easier time to forgive. If you have not experienced that healing of your own hurt it will be harder to forgive others.

Open wounds hurt. Open wounds are exposed to the environment and if hit will cause deep pain.

If you have a hard time forgiving, then you have old wounds that have not healed. Maybe you haven't experienced the Lord's forgiveness. Maybe you have old wounds inflicted by others or even by yourself. His forgiveness brings healing to our wounds.

Psalm 147:3 "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."