

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday February 27, 2022. "The Genius of Forgiveness. The power to heal relationships."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're now in 2022, a brand new year, and we're excited about where God is leading us. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's area is expanding and we are retooling our student ministry. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can check all that out through our social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group

II Recap.

This series began with the belief the teachings and truths of Jesus are counter-intuitive. They force us to pull out all of our assumptions and ideologies. Hold them up alongside Jesus's life to see if they're actually from God. Ask; **is what we believe is true, or an ideology, assumption handed to us?** These teachings require courage, humility, the ability to have beliefs, operate your life from those beliefs, and be open-minded enough to consider different views and perspectives. Our working definition of genius, (open for scrutiny) is; **Genius- to apply a counter intuitive creative solution to a situation or currently held school of thought ... and it works.**

Which means genius implies there is risk pushing against commonly held protected beliefs or practices with newly discovered truths. Genius also requires us to rethink and reexamine what we thought to be true. These would be our beliefs and assumptions. Genius asks us to shift how we view, understand, and live based on what these people brought to the world. This is the "**since**" we've talked about. *Since this is true...* our lives need to look like this now.

The first week we talked about the genius and power of incarnation. The genius of being among, with, others. The second week we talked about the genius of love, and the importance of doing some real work to see what practicing this love Jesus talked about and practiced in our daily life. Last week we talked about the genius of surrender, and how it protects us from an unhealthy obsession and abuse of power and getting our way...even if it is for good.. And today we talk about a really difficult genius of Jesus...forgiveness.

III Sunday.

As always, we want to wrestle with the idea of forgiveness before we dive into the scriptures.

What makes forgiving others difficult for you? Why?

What makes asking for forgiveness difficult for you? Why?

We approached the idea of forgiveness in a different way. Traditionally, most speakers try to build a case for forgiveness. We use passages that call us to live a life of forgiving others. There are tons of specific teachings, commands, and stories about the call to forgive others. But honestly, don't we already know that? What more information do you need to know that we are supposed to forgive

others? We all know forgiveness is not an information thing. Forgiveness is an obedience thing. So we took the angle of why should we forgive, and what happens to us, within us, when we don't. Read the two passages and we'll discuss them. As we've done in the past three weeks, the first scripture is the proclamation by Jesus about forgiveness, and then the practice of this by Jesus. Read **Matthew 5:21-26**, and **Luke 23:32-34**.

What jumped out to you from these passages?

How did you see forgiveness taught or practiced?

Why do you believe forgiveness was so essential in these accounts?

The first passage basically revealed two truths about forgiveness.

1. Unforgiveness hurts our relationship with God. Passage talks about the significance of forgiving, and the impact if we don't. And what it should feel like if we hold onto grudges. We can lose ourselves in overemphasizing the vertical relationship with God. *"Me and God are good, just loving and praising him."* God so welcomes that. We are fed and grow from it. But there are tons of passages that address only our vertical relationship with God at the expense of ignoring our horizontal relationships with others. God uses phrases like; *"those disgust me, are a stench in my nose, away with the noise of your songs"*. If we don't value and put work into the health of our relationships with others, God then has no desire to be in relationship with us. We all have a built acceptance, get used to the weight and burden of carrying around so much unresolved anger, hurt, resentment, bitterness. It just becomes very normal to hold onto some weird belief that unforgiveness is ok. We have to take this particular truth seriously in how it affects our relationship with God.

2. Unforgiveness, nurturing past hurt, being wrong, is poison. You may have built up some resistance to the poison...but it's still poison. Unresolved hurt, bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness is rooted in the belief that we don't trust God to be just. We can't let go of hurt because we believe, feel deep within us, if we forgive others who hurt us, that they'll get away with what they did. And justice won't be served. So, we take on the role of judge, jury, and executioner, making sure those who hurt us get what's coming to them. That's why this final genius of forgiveness is so...genius. Forgiveness is the only thing that will **break the chains** of hurts, wrongs, sufferings of life will place ourselves in bondage to, that we will allow ourselves to be enslaved to. Frees us from worldly based obsession with criminal justice rather than God's practice of justice. Forgiveness restores what was taken from us, rebuilds our relationship, and faith in God.

How does knowing each of these inspire you to live a life of continually forgiving others?

IV Challenge.

The final truth and challenge of learning to fully lean into this practice of forgiving others is to realize the power and control to forgive is ALL in our hands. That's what makes forgiveness so genius. Not only because it frees us from prisons we build for ourselves, but our ability to forgive is not dependent on what anyone else does. The control is all in our hands. We just have to push past our own hesitation and unwillingness to forgive in order to work this process.

So, three closing questions.

Who in your life do you need to take the first step of forgiveness towards?

What might be standing in your way? And you may need to pray and contemplate on this?

What are one or two steps could you take that would move you in that direction?