

Discovering God's Character through our Struggles: Peace - August 23rd

She bought a \$2,500 car two weeks before we left. She's got faith like no other. We made it to Phoenix before that faith ran out. I'm sorry, we made it to Vegas before that. I mean, what a horrible place to break down. But we spent the morning of the second day looking for a mechanic that wouldn't rob us or... Never mind. We were in Vegas. You know, we don't want to be taken advantage of. But we did find something, and we were able to get back on the road. We only lost about four or five hours, so it was really good. But car's running great. She's doing good. We got her all moved in. We enjoyed a couple of days. I shouldn't say enjoyed. That's a lie. I spoke about lying a couple weeks ago. We spent a couple days avoiding the 105 plus degree weather that we had every day. And I was thinking like most, like you either do stuff in the evening or you do stuff in the morning. So I'm a morning person. I get up early. I was up at 5.30 several of those mornings. And so I was like, well, I'm going to go outside and experience the cool of the morning. They don't actually have that there, I learned. Because when the hotel doors opened, an 85 degree weather just like punched me in the nose and I'm like, wow, good morning. And so that was it. I also experienced a first. I experienced a first when I was in Phoenix last year. I experienced another first this year. It was a heat warning. How many of you have ever been in a heat warning? It's like, well, that's not big. This was an overnight heat warning. In the evening, the temperature was not going to get below 90 degrees. And so they issued a heat warning for the nighttime. Needless to say, I stayed in my hotel room that night, but it was miserable. But I find it fascinating that Most of us who've experienced heat like that helps us to understand how emotions get stirred into a frenzy and how hate can flare and why that's often compared to fire and the destructive nature of it. And this morning we are going to be looking at the next commandment where we are commanded not to murder. And when you're walking around in 105 degree temperatures, murder is like, it is on the tip of your mind. More murdering the sun or something like that, but still. But what it highlights is our struggle with peace. We struggle with peace. And of course, as we struggle with peace, God is going to reveal himself both as the God of peace, but also as the God who forgives. And when we're talking about murder, forgiveness is one of those key elements of that. So if you will turn your in your Bibles with me, we're going to be in Colossians chapter three. We're going to read these here and then I will come back to them by the end of the sermon. But Colossians chapter three, we're going to read verses 12 through 15. Those scriptures say, since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must also forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony, and let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body, you are called to live in peace and to always be thankful. Let's pray this morning. Lord, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you that you reveal yourself to us as the God of peace. God, not only that, we thank you that you give to us forgiveness when we ask for it. So this morning, as we dive into your word, as we look at this commandment to not commit murder, Lord, we ask that you would speak to us, speak to our hearts. Lord, I ask that you would anoint my words to follow your direction. God, and I pray that you would anoint our hearts and ears to hear what you would say to us. We thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. As we have gone through these sermons the past couple weeks, I have repeatedly stated that we define the commandments extremely narrowly so as to make sure that we're innocent of transgressing them. It's like, no, I don't really do that that much. Or we define it in ways that helps assuage our guilt or make us feel better. But I believe this commandment, hopefully, if I was to ask if anyone in here has committed actual murder, no one would raise their hands. But I don't know. I'm not asking. You can plead the Fauci again, so you don't have to. But I do believe this one, by far and large, is one that most people can honestly say, yeah, I've never ended someone else's life. Physically. Knife. Murder. I've never done that. And with that knowledge, and with the words of Jesus that say, you know, if you hate someone, it's like you have murdered them in your heart, we kind of understand and begin to look for deeper meanings with this commandment. Because it's like, well, I've never done that, but if God is telling me not to murder, there must be something he wants me to be aware of. So how else could this be defined? And of course, Jesus does that for us with his statement about hate being equal to murder, or murder being equal to hate. And so we look for the deeper meaning. And I don't know about you, and I know we see it a lot on TV, but most of us, when we think about the concept of murder... It is such a violent, emotional, irrational, repulsive action. It's hard to fathom why someone could allow themselves to get to this point in their life. I mean, what kind of rage and what kind of disconnect from reality do you have to have to get to the point where you actually want to end a life is hard for most people to fathom. It disgusts us. It's something that I really think God has given us because life is so precious. We don't want to murder someone else. And like all

things, we don't just wake up one day and say, Well, I'm going to kill so and so today and actually follow through. Some people might say that, but they might not follow through. So the idea that murder, it doesn't start big, it starts small, with small seeds that are planted in our hearts. See, in our culture, rarely do we experience hate on the level of murder. Protect your toes, I'm gonna step on them here. We might get emotional, we might flip people off, we might cuss them with a string of words that we wouldn't say in front of our mother or our pastor. And we might dive off into some tirade of emotional... And I believe that all of those things are inexcusable. It's indulging in your flesh and killing your spirit. But that's my opinion. Take it up with the Lord. But anyway, after that emotional eruption, because that's really what it is, it's something that is just like... It subsides a little bit. We go about our day. We don't chase them down. We don't kill them. We don't murder them. We don't cause them to wreck or whatever it is. But we come down from that explosion and never kill someone. Hopefully. And really, this is the story of Cain and Abel. If you want to read a story of how someone can go from mutual working together to ultimately... Killing that friend, brother, Cain and Abel give us the story. Genesis 4, verses 3-5 says, "...in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat, and the Lord respected Abel and his offering." But he did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry and his countenance fell. Something that I'd never really thought about until this week as I studied this. These two people are introduced with them, I almost see walking shoulder to shoulder with their offerings going to church. They're going to worship God. They're going to present offerings to the same God. They're friends, they're talking, they're having a good time, they're brothers, they grew up together, and they're going to church together. But one gets angry, not just like, he gets angry, really angry, and it begins to take root in his heart. See, here's where murder starts. It starts first with sinful anger. It starts with contempt for someone else. We're going to talk about these things. It blossoms into bitterness, or it might even start with bitterness and unforgiveness towards what someone has done to us. See, sinful anger is anger that is very self-centered. It results in destructive outcomes. See, Cain's anger was sinful anger because it resulted in a destructive outcome. And it does not bring about the righteousness of God. I need to point, not all anger is sin. There is righteous anger. There is anger that comes about that will bring about the righteousness of God. We're just not... Most of the time, our anger, though, is sinful. Even Jesus said, be angry and sin not. There is the ability to do that, but it's hard for us. So this is the kind of anger that Cain demonstrated. Contempt is viewing or treating someone or people as worthless and below consideration, treating them as objects. In our past, we've had slaves. A horrible practice, but it was the idea of having contempt for a group of people. They saw them as less than and just objects to be owned. We don't have slaves now, but we do practice contempt quite often. This became Cain's view of Abel. He got so mad that God refused his offering that all of a sudden Abel wasn't a person. He was an obstacle. He was a problem. He needed to get rid of this. He became less than, below consideration. I think most of us are familiar with bitterness. We've experienced it in some way. I was trying to think of a way to describe bitterness. And how many of you have, I'll tell the story. We were at Costco a couple weeks ago, and there was this very sneaky lady handing out samples. And there was some sample of this fruit, candied fruit, or I don't even remember what it was, like gummy, fruit gummy stuff. And she's just handing it out like it's great. We all took it, and it was like, come on. And she had this neat little cheeky smile on her face. Bitterness inside of our heart is whenever we see someone or we think of someone and we have that very same reaction within us. There's this ill will. There's this disgust. They haven't even done anything. They just walked across your path and there's this bitterness to them and there's this disgust towards them. And I believe we all understand what unforgiveness is, unfortunately. But in Cain's life, he allowed this bitterness and unforgiveness to fester and take root in his heart. See, when we plant these seeds, you might not even know that you're planting them, but when we allow these emotions to go unchecked, we're really planting these seeds in our heart. And they eventually take root. They grow down. They grow sprouts. They begin to grow fruit. And as these roots take place and get settled into our heart, they produce attitudes and patterns of thought that no longer go from our heart and our thoughts. They begin to escape our lips. We begin to speak. We begin to tear them down. We begin to say negative things about them. We begin to give voice to what our thoughts are thinking, and we actually begin to speak them. You know what that means? Whenever you begin to speak them, you're training yourself to believe them. What is faith? Faith is the evidence of things heard, the confession of the mouth. It's repeating what you believe and verbalizing that. We do the same thing with hate. We begin to give voice to the thoughts, to attacking, to speaking hateful words, to doing and to saying things that we wouldn't normally say. And we definitely wouldn't say it in front of their face, but we just begin to say them out loud. And if left unchecked and unresolved, they go from the lips to the hands. They take action. Because now we're thinking it, we're believing it, we're speaking it. The only thing that's left is for us to act upon it. Faith is an amazing mirror to this. We believe it, we speak it, we live it. Hate is the same thing. If we think it and we speak it, we believe it. And if we believe it, we live it. And if

that's left unchecked, it will ultimately degrade into how murders take place. Because all of a sudden, these people are not even valuable enough to have life, and we're okay that we take life from them. It's perfectly fine. That's the process of murder. That's how murder happens. That's the story of Cain and Abel. It continues in Genesis chapter 4, the Lord said to Cain, why are you so angry? Why are you so angry? Why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? If you do not do well, sin lies at the door and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it. It's a beautiful script in the New Testament. You can put all this to, you can stop all of this from happening. It says, take your thoughts captive. Examine them. Make sure it's what you really believe. It's what you really want to say. This is how it begins. And that's what God is talking about here. If you take those thoughts captives, it stops sin at the door. It doesn't even give it the opportunity to take root in your heart. So Cain is asked by God, why are you so angry? Why is your countenance fallen? Another way to look at that, Cain has already lost his peace. It has gotten so ingrained in him, his anger is so real, he has abandoned every facet of peace in his life. It's consuming him. And that's where we land and what our struggle is. I'm going to pause here just for a minute in the story of Cain and Abel. to talk about peace just for a moment. How many of us here today would say, Pastor Will, I want, desire, and long for peace in my life? Liars. As I was typing this out on Friday, I was asking the question, and before I even finished asking it, my mind said, in what way? In what way do you mean do I want peace? You want people to leave me alone? Yes, I'll take that peace. See, we struggle with peace. As much as we desire it, we struggle with it. I found this quote years ago. I love it. I tried to find it again, but I couldn't, so I gave it my own Will Parsons rendition of it. But it goes like this, it says, in all of recorded history of thousands of years of human history, it's an interesting fact that only 400 years of that history can be noted that there was peace in the world. No conflicts, no wars, nothing like that. It is assumed, however, they were just using the time to reload. And it paints such a wonderful picture of our internal state. Because even if we happen to find peace, we are able to take five minutes and we sit on the couch and we just let it take a breath. It doesn't even take three or four minutes and your mind is like, man, I shouldn't be doing this. I should be doing something else. What else can I do? And our minds start finding things that we need to be doing. And all of a sudden we're stressed because this isn't done and the car is done, I need to go do that. And there's no peace. There's no peace. And that's why this passage in Colossians, Paul is telling us, the only way that you can find peace is if you allow it to rule in your hearts. Let the peace that comes from Christ... Rule in your heart. That's hard. We don't like that. We don't want that. There's too many things to do. It's a very difficult place for us to be in. It's hard because we have to learn to let some things go. I'm 47 years old. I've raised five kids. I have two that are in college. Looking forward to empty nesting, even though everybody says it's horrible. I'm like, come Lord Jesus, come. And I am just coming to the place to learn that not everything that I think I want to do is really good for me. There are some conflicts that are out of my realm of responsibility. I don't have to make peace for everybody. There are some situations that I don't have to interject myself in. There's a proverb that I love. It's like, and I'm not going to misquote it, sorry, but you're going to get the gist of it. It said, getting involved in a conflict that's not yours is like ringing a dog's ear. You're just inviting the fight towards you. And I've learned, man, there are some things I'm just like, whoo, I'm just going to watch this one. I don't have a dog in that fight. I don't want to be in it. We have to learn to let things go. We have to begin to understand there are things out of our control. Do you want to know where I experienced that this past week? We were in Phoenix. I had to get to the airport. It was an hour on the other side of Phoenix. My daughter, who's 19 years old, who is a very spirited redhead, who now has a car in Phoenix, has to drive me to the airport on Monday morning. Guess who's sitting in the passenger seat? Um... Guess who's understanding, like, I can't do this for her. I have to let her do this. As we're driving down a seven-lane road going one direction with cars everywhere. And I look over at Micaiah, poor darling, and she's got white skin enough already. But, I mean, her knuckles were white on the steering wheel. And she's getting ready to go drop me off and have to turn around and come back in the lunch rush of all of this. And I'm like, you know what? I can't do this for her. I have to let this go. I have to be at peace with this. Needless to say, I don't think I did well until I got the text. I made it back. Good. And then the doors closed on the plane and I was able to fly. I was like, man, this is going to be a really long flight if I don't get a text. As I began to think about this, peace seems to be something that lived during our grandparents' age. It's not something that you and I get to experience much. And a lot of it's our own fault. We're saturated with information. There's news on 24 hours a day. Every 10 minutes, there's breaking news somewhere. We can have it on our phone, dinging at us. There's doom and gloom in every story we read. There's death and destruction. And it's not just here in Helena. We get that enough. It's not just here in Montana. We get that enough. It's in our nation. And not only that, it's globally. Do you realize you can know what's going on in any corner of the earth right now at any given time all the time and be updated with it? So much information. It's very easy to see how we can let anxiety and worry rule our hearts and minds because there's just so much coming at us. How do I interpret this? How do I use this? How do I make sense of this?

And it's easy to see how we can struggle with peace. But here's what we need to be reminded of. Jesus tells us that we must allow peace in our heart. We must allow peace to rule in our heart. John 14, verse 27 says, "Peace I leave with you. "I give you my peace, not as the world gives, Do I give you? Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. See, we have to understand that God gives us peace, but we have to accept it and we have to let it rule in our hearts. So since Jesus has done this, and since we're talking about murder this morning, how do these things intersect? How do we allow peace to rule in our hearts when we have all of this stuff going around? We have all of this news going around. We have all these peoples with ideologies and with thoughts and with lives that we really don't like. And it's very easy to get trapped and to be like, God, I hate those people. Could they just go away? And it can be from any facet or part of life. But there comes this point where we just get so overwhelmed, it turns into this hate and we're just like, could you just leave me alone? We have to be able to understand that one of the ways that we let peace rule in our hearts is through forgiveness. It's by letting things go. It's by allowing God to be God and to give it into his hands and be like, you know what, God, I can't do anything with this. And we have to learn to walk in forgiveness. Because how we overcome murder, how we overcome hate, Because if we're talking about it in the context of murder, it's typically against a person. It's someone we know. It's someone around us. How we overcome that and not allow hate to grow into this evil thing called murder is we have to learn to walk in forgiveness. But not just any forgiveness. It has to be God's forgiveness. See, I understand, and I know as I get started in this, that forgiveness is a very difficult subject for many of us. I understand as I begin this that some of us have experienced horrible offenses at the hands of friends, at the hands of family, other church members, church leaders, strangers. So I want you to know as I enter into this part of this, I understand that there has been some atrocities done to many of us. And in all honesty, looking at it from a very human perspective, I can understand and justify some of that hate that you might have to certain people. And even as I say this, I realize that I'm stirring up things that maybe some of us have let go dormant, and we've kind of buried under enough of the rubble of life that it's really not bothering us. But this morning, I hope, serves as your reminder that these things have to be dealt with. They're not things that we can just let go. See, forgiveness is a very major theme of Scripture. The idea of forgiving and related words like pardoning and things like that is mentioned over 140 times in Scripture. We're not given the ability to just let some things go. Some of the things we have to deal with. And the way we have to deal with them, well, they're not always fun. Jesus tells us in the Gospels, Peter asked, if someone wrongs me, do I forgive them seven times? We all know the answer. Jesus says no. You forgive them 70 times seven. And most of us, you know how much is 70 times seven? 490. So you know what most of us have done? I only have to forgive that person 490 times. We're on 378. We're getting there. We are getting there. Can I burst your bubble? It's not 490 times. In reality, Jesus was saying that there is no limit to forgiveness. And we should take this as a sign of goodwill. Because I can promise you, everyone in this room, no matter how old you are, have transgressed God's commandments more than 490 times. And guess what? God still offers forgiveness to you. I was given this book about unforgiveness. It's called Unpacking Forgiveness by Chris Bronze. And this book talks about the complex questions and answers surrounding biblical forgiveness. And in the second or third chapter, I don't remember exactly which one, he defines the forgiveness of God in this way. This is what he says. He said, God offers forgiveness. I'm sorry, God's forgiveness is a commitment by the one true God to pardon graciously those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him, although not all consequences are eliminated." All sins are forgiven, but not all consequences are eliminated. How many of us in this room have experienced the gracious pardoning of our sins through the repentance and placing our faith in Jesus? We're no longer enemies of God. We even find from God that he calls us friends. How many of you are glad God doesn't stop there? Because there's one little bitty part at the end of that definition that if God was refusing to do, it would be very difficult for us. Because it says God graciously pardons those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him. How many of us would think that we forgive like God. And as you think about that question, even though most of you have answered, most of us will dredge up painful, treacherous wrongs that planted hatred, that took root, that has gone to verbalizing Attacks, speaking negative things that bring death. Do we forgive like God? Most of us don't. And look, I'm not casting stones here. This is all about all of us. I deal with my own stuff. I'm here this morning to present the truth of God's word. Do I do it the way that I'm going to preach to you? Not all the time. But is what I'm saying wrong? Absolutely not. It is scripture. So I say that understanding there's a lot of deep, hard, hurtful wounds. So as I speak to this, understand I also bear deep, hard, hurtful wounds that I have to deal with in my own thing. See, we understand the danger of harboring unforgiveness. We know that we've all heard the saying, if I harbor unforgiveness, it's only hurting me. Right? And we will sometimes give it reluctantly. Maybe, kind of, we'll say, yeah, you're forgiven. But then we walk away. Because I will never be reconciled in any way. See, we like when we're given forgiveness from God and God reconciles with us. He comes to us and he's like, yeah, the relationship is restored. Thank you, Lord. I

don't know if I could, I couldn't go if you didn't have the reconciliation with God. And we like it because God is the one making the commitment, who's graciously pardoning and allowing the perfect and holy God, the one who was wronged, To restore us, the offender. The onus is on who? It's on God. God is the one, if we're asking for forgiveness, he is the one making the commitment to pardon us and to receive us back. See, that's not our definition of forgiveness, though. So if we were going to take the definition that we just had from this author, Chris, and we're going to then move it into how do you and I forgive? This is how he defined how forgiveness from you and I should come. So for me to forgive you, I must make a commitment as the one offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability. Do you want to know what moral liability is? If you have wronged me and you owe me something, I release you from that moral liability. In other words, you no longer owe me anything. Forgiveness is saying I excuse and I remove and I release you from the debt of what you owe me. So I must make the commitment as the one offended to pardon graciously the repentant and from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person. Dang, he had to put that in there, didn't he? Although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated. See, biblical forgiveness seeks reconciliation. Human forgiveness doesn't care about reconciliation. And I get it, guys. I know the thoughts swirling. You don't understand the hurt. There's no way that I could physically forgive them for what they've done. And I want you to understand, I'm not saying that forgiveness doesn't have conditions. God's forgiveness for us has conditions. How do we receive forgiveness from God? Does God just offer it willy-nilly to anyone and everyone at any point in any time? It's a trick question. Don't answer. Because His forgiveness is always available, but does everyone experience His forgiveness? So what do I have to do? You have to ask. Oh, but I can't earn my salvation. No, it's not earning your salvation. You have to ask to be pardoned. Jesus came, he shed his blood so that all sinners who wanted to be forgiven could be forgiven. That doesn't mean, like some people say, it was just a few people. whom God chose and selected before everything. I don't believe that way. I believe that Jesus came to seek the lost. He didn't come to seek a few lost people. He came to seek all. His heart is that all would come to repentance. If he wants everybody to come to repentance, he's not like, well, I'm only going to save a few of them, no. They really have to be like cream of the crop if I'm going to save them. That's not how God works. That's not how God's forgiveness works to us. There are conditions. See, but the problem is for us, most of us work off an idea or assumption of what's called therapeutic forgiveness. You know what therapeutic forgiveness is? Good, I'm going to teach you what therapeutic forgiveness is. Therapeutic forgiveness is, I've been wronged. So I'm going to stop being angry at Tom and I'm just going to let it go. Tom said something very offensive to me and it hurt very bad, but Tom's not going to ask me for forgiveness. So I'm just, I'm going to let it go. It's going to be all right. I'm just going to, as we all do, I forgave him in my heart. Tom has not asked for forgiveness. How can you forgive someone who has not asked for something? You can't forgive someone who has. Oh, Will, what are you talking about? Keep your tomatoes. We're going to get through this. See, therapeutic forgiveness is saying that I'm reducing forgiveness to just offloading the resentment I feel. I don't want to actually deal with it. I feel so much better. Even though nothing has been done, there's been no resolution. We do it to say, oh, I feel so much better. Aren't you glad God doesn't work in therapeutic forgiveness? Oh, I sent Jesus and he paid for your sins. I did my part. Go to hell. I'm not dealing with you again. I'm not touching you again. I've done my part. I feel better. I don't care about the reconciliation part. Aren't you glad God doesn't practice therapeutic forgiveness? So if that's not what we should do, if that's not how we should forgive, how do we forgive or how do we give forgiveness to someone who isn't seeking it? Well, we follow God's example. God has offered and made forgiveness available to everyone. Not everyone chooses to be forgiven. So the ones who find forgiveness must ask for it. So for those in our lives who refuse to be repentant, they haven't come and asked for forgiveness. You haven't been willing to go up and say, hey, you really offended me and talked it through and had the conversation and been able to discover, to be able to discuss what went on and given them the ability to say, well, you know what, man, I really messed up. I really need you to forgive me. But if rather we've chosen to be like, you know what? I'm just, I'm going to let that be. I'm not going to talk to them again. I'm deleting their number. I'm blocking their email. The relationship is finished. So that I can feel better and move on with my life thinking, huh, I'm doing okay. We can forgive like the example that God has given us. So this is how this works. For those who are not repentant, Our job as the person offended is to not harbor vengeance. Well, they offended me, I hope. Whatever it is, fill in the blank. We should pray for them. Think about God. Does God hate the sinner that hasn't repented? No. What does He do? He seeks them. He sends the Holy Spirit to convict them. He chases them. He tries to reconcile the relationship. Does God stop praying for them? No. In the same concept, his mind is turned towards them. Jesus came to seek the sinner. Not to be like, yeah, I'm going to do this, but you're on your own. We can do the same. We can begin to pray over the relationship. Pray for them. We have to resist bitterness. Man, that's hard. That's hard. And here's one of the hardest ones, especially if we've let things go. We have to be ready to forgive. What I love about Jesus is I

can run from him and run from him and run from him. But the moment I stop and say, you know what, Lord Jesus, I need your forgiveness. You know what Jesus doesn't do? Well, you've been running for 10 years, so I'll let you stew in that for a few more minutes. And you haven't begged really well enough yet. And you haven't made up for this egregious thing. No, Jesus and God are ready to forgive. The moment we come to the place and say, you know what? I need your forgiveness. Father, forgive me for my sin. And it is immediate. See, that's how God works with those who aren't repentant. There's still the readiness to give. So if there's someone in your life who has wronged you and there's been no repentance asked for, I would ask a couple questions. Have you gone and discussed with them? Are they even aware that they have offended you? Have you been able to be civil enough to go and have a conversation with them and maybe work out the details and help them understand how they've hurt you and give them an opportunity to express forgiveness? Because that's what God does. We can read his word. The Holy Spirit comes and convicts us. He calls out to us. He seeks us to restore the relationship. God is long-suffering in that regard. So here's what I would like to say as we begin to wrap this up. I would like to add this statement, that I understand most of this has a lot of pain and stuff that I don't understand. So I would encourage you to begin to pray to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you scripture to begin to work through how you should go about resolving some of these things. Because we have to come to the point where we're willing to forgive like God. So what happens when there is someone who is repentant, who maybe has hurt us very badly, and they come to us and say, hey, you know, I really, I understand I messed up. I own my mistake. I'm sorry. That's my fault. Will you forgive me? We have to be like God in the same vein and be like, yes. But unfortunately, it doesn't stop there. We are to forgive God. But also seek reconciliation. And this is probably the hardest part of what I'm going to say this morning. Reconciliation is very important to forgiveness. Imagine if God was willing to forgive you but not reconcile the relationship. Would you really feel forgiven? No. No. Take that upon us. If we're willing to glibly say, I forgive you, but I'm not touching or doing anything, I don't want nothing to do with you. Have you forgiven them? Now everybody's like, oh, I just can't do the reconciliation. Keep this in mind. To say I forgive you And the statement that there are no consequences because of the wrong done are not the same thing. The end of both of those definitions says it does not necessarily eliminate consequences. There can be consequences to the action. There can be true forgiveness given. There can be reconciliation made, but that doesn't mean that all the consequences go away. See, we can give forgiveness and it be real, but have trust on life support. That's okay. Funny thing about trust is it takes a lifetime to build and can be destroyed in a moment. So here's an example. I invite you to my house. And over time, you begin to steal from my house. I find out about this. I confront you about this. You say, Pastor Will, I need you to forgive me. I've been stealing from your house. I'm willing to forgive you. I'm willing to continue to be your friend. I'm willing to even continue to invite you over to my house. But guess what? You're only going to be in the living room. You're not even going to go to the bathroom by yourself. And if it's been really bad, we might just sit on the porch and visit. There can be consequences for the actions that you've done, but still have true forgiveness and reconciliation made. But most of us don't want to do that. We've been hurt so bad, I'm not ever reconciling with them. See, there can be boundaries. But forgiveness without reconciliation is incomplete. That kind of forgiveness is therapeutic forgiveness. It only serves me. It doesn't serve both parties. So Colossians 3, verse 12 through 15 says, We are God's holy people, so we must clothe ourselves with tenderness, mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. I think it's right that he starts there, because his very next statement is, make allowance for someone else's faults. In other words, that doesn't say make excuses. That doesn't mean that there's not confrontation that has to be done. But it says we can be clothed with tenderhearted mercy, with kindness, with humility, with gentleness, and with patience as we make allowance for people's faults, for people who have wronged us. And it says, forgive anyone who offends you and ask for forgiveness. Because the Lord forgave you, so you must also forgive others. And really, I believe when we choose not to offer forgiveness, and we choose not to be reconciled to those who have offended us, we lose our clothing of love. It is one of the things to say that, yeah, I forgive you, but there's no love there. There's no relationship there. There's no, we're not coming together again. And as we do this, and as we forgive, it lets the peace that comes from Christ rule in our hearts. It gives us the ability to be at peace. Forgiveness with God and us means that there is peace between God and me. I'm not his enemy anymore. The beautiful thing about forgiveness with reconciliation is it removes us from being enemies to becoming friends. Because that's what God has done for us. He's forgiven us in that way. Can we say amen this morning? I know forgiveness is hard, guys. I know most people don't want to hear about this. They'd rather just live with their therapeutic forgiveness, call it good. I also want you to know that these things can take time. The beautiful thing about God is that forgiveness is instantaneous, but God is, well, he's not us, and we're not him. So I understand that there are things that can take time. That's why I encourage you to begin to pray to the Holy Spirit, submit to his leading, follow his conviction, and do what he's asking you to

do, because as he brings you to these places, he will lead you and guide you and prepare you for what is going to happen. So in closing this morning, Forgiveness kills the seeds of murder in our heart. Murder begins in the heart with sinful anger, with hatred, with unforgiveness, with bitterness. And forgiveness is what kills them. It's like Roundup for the heart. I don't know where you are. I don't know if you are struggling with peace right now. Maybe there's some situation in your life, there's some relationship that's gone south, and you're just like, I don't have peace in this situation. I want you to ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart, to show you where you need to seek forgiveness or ask forgiveness from someone. And there's one caveat to this. Don't rule yourself out of that equation. Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is us. It's ourselves. I have had seasons of no peace because I foolishly sinned against myself and refused to let it go. And I just beat myself over, why would you do that? Why would you do that? God forgave me, but I chose not to forgive myself. If you're struggling with peace, odds are you need to give forgiveness somewhere. I want to pray with us this morning. that we would find the courage and strength to seek and to ask for forgiveness and to be willing to give forgiveness to those who ask of us.