

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Ephesians
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Anger and Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:30-32

³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

(Nate walks out in a Texas A&M shirt, audience laughing) I don't love it. Yeah. Many people have asked, "Did I lose a bet?" No, I did not lose a bet. The real question you should be asking is, "Man, is Harris Creek willing to do anything to help me follow Jesus?" And the answer is yes, because this is like my nightmare right now. In fact, I cannot believe I'm wearing this shirt. I know I'm wearing something I should not be wearing right now. Because guys, I love Baylor. Like I bleed green and gold. Absolutely. I went to Baylor for undergrad and got my master's degree at Baylor. I spent a lot of money at Baylor, giving them all my money, giving them all my time, like I'm a huge Baylor fan. And because of that, I would never ever want to be seen in public wearing an Aggie shirt. Like wearing A&M stuff, that just makes my skin crawl.

And I know there's a lot of Aggies here and you're like, "Nate, we don't care about Baylor anymore, we left 12 years ago. We're in the SEC now." You don't care about us; we still care about you. So I'm sorry, I know we're the little brother. You guys are doing bigger, better things. Actually, check that, we've won a national championship more recently. We're doing bigger, better things. Yeah. So, although you don't really care about us, we still care about you, which is why I would never be seen wearing this, except for this moment right now. I don't like that other people see that I'm wearing this shirt, because this isn't who I am. I'm wearing something that I shouldn't be wearing.

Why do I say that? Well some of you, you've gotten really comfortable wearing something you should not be wearing. Other people see it, and maybe you don't. Because maybe you've been wearing it for a really long time and you just assume, yeah, this is just who I am. You're wearing this in your heart. And I just want you to know that the thing that you're wearing doesn't line up with who you say you are. Because there are things in your life where you say, "Hey, yeah, I'm a follower of Jesus. Absolutely, I love the Lord. And I also cannot stand my coworker." Those two things don't add up. Or you might say, "Oh, I'm a Christian. Yeah. I've been following Jesus for a really long time. Oh, but yeah, I will never forgive my mom." Or you say, "Yeah, I'm a member at a church. Yeah, absolutely, I'm a Christian. Love the Lord, but I hope I never talk to my brother again, because I can't stand him." And you see, unforgiveness, bitterness, rage, resentment, wearing all those things in your heart, does not line up with being a follower of Jesus. And yet all those things are so commonplace in the church, they really are.

As a pastor, I get to be with people and help plan things like funerals and weddings. And when you help plan funerals and weddings, you get to see a lot of family dynamics. And I tell you

what, oftentimes, not every single time, but oftentimes, there's a conversation like this, where it's like, "Oh yeah, we didn't invite my aunt because she and my mom, they can't stand each other. Something happened years and years ago and they haven't talked to each other in years." Or "Yeah, we invited our cousins, but they're not going to come because their dad and my dad, yeah, they fought a long time ago and my dad doesn't like him, and he doesn't like him, and it's just kind of a disaster, so we don't even really talk about it or address it." Those things are really, really normal in families.

Those things cannot be normal in this family. Because as people of the family of God, we cannot have resentment, bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness in this family. Because while it may be normalized for church attenders to hold onto bitterness and unforgiveness, it is not normal for Jesus followers to hold onto bitterness and resentment. We don't wear those things because we follow in Jesus' footsteps. And if we're going to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we have to follow in the forgiveness of Jesus. And as Jesus people, we wear forgiveness. We don't wear anger, bitterness, resentment, and rage, because those things don't line up with who we claim to be.

So this morning we're going to talk about the necessity of forgiveness. That's where we're going, the necessity of forgiveness. And before we get into Ephesians chapter 4, where we're going to be today, I just want to start with a definition of forgiveness. Forgiveness is actually a somewhat difficult thing to really nail down and define what it is, but the best definition that I've been able to find is this: Forgiveness is forgoing the right to revenge and resentment. Forgiveness is foregoing the right to revenge and resentment. Forgiveness is not tossing aside justice. Forgiveness is not- our relationship is just going to be the same no matter what. Forgiveness is not- there's no boundaries in our life. Those things are not necessarily forgiveness. But forgiveness is foregoing the right for resentment and revenge, and this is who we have to be. Jesus' people are forgiving people, and we cannot wear things that are incongruent to who we claim to be.

So we're going to be in Ephesians, finishing out Ephesians chapter 4. We're just going to be in three verses today, verses 30, 31, and 32. We're closing out this chapter, and these verses really fall in line with what JP taught to end last week, because in that last part that JP was teaching, Paul's writing a list of a lot of things where it's like, "Hey, don't do this, but do this." Paul says stuff like "Don't lie, but do speak truthfully, and don't steal, but do work hard, and don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but do speak words that are helpful for building one another up." And these verses here complete that thought. And we're going to take each one, just a verse at a time.

Here's what Paul writes in verse 30. He says this: "**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**" There are two warnings in scripture in regard to our relationship with the Holy Spirit. The first comes in 1 Thessalonians 5: 19, where Paul writes "**Do not quench the Holy Spirit.**" That word for do not quench, means that there's like a fire in your soul. The Holy Spirit's like a fire burning in your soul. And he asks you to do something. And when you say no, when you don't obey what he's calling you to do, it puts the fire out in you. It quenches the spirit. The other warning is right here in Ephesians chapter 4, where Paul says, "**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.**" And it's similar, but it's different in

a way. Because grieving the Holy Spirit is not just saying no to obedience, it's also saying yes to disobedience. It's not just saying, "Hey, I'm not going to do that", but it's saying, "I'm actually going to go do the opposite as well." And when you fall into sin, when you choose sin, it grieves the Spirit of God. And this is point number one. The first thing we can learn from this passage is this:

1. *Do not grieve the spirit.*

Do not grieve the spirit. And to illustrate that, let me take you back to a moment on our honeymoon. We got married about six years ago, and our honeymoon and the week before our wedding were like two of the best weeks of my life, perhaps the best two weeks of my life. And one of the reasons for that, was the couple of days leading up to our wedding were an absolute blast, because my best friends in the whole wide world came into town. My friends from Baylor and my friends from high school, they were all there with me for a few days and it was unbelievable. They all became friends with one another and it was like, this is the best! I love this!

So, we're on our honeymoon and my wife is on the beach reading a book and I'm playing by myself in the water, and I'm just thinking about that last week, and I'm like man, I had so much fun last week hanging out with my friends, that was awesome, I want to do it again. So I'm like, I'm just going to go buy a plane ticket in a couple weeks. I'm going to go visit them because I had so much fun, so I want to go see them again. So I'm all excited about this. I leave the water, go talk to my new bride, and I'm like, "Hey, Adelle, I just was thinking I made a decision. I'm going to go buy a plane ticket to go visit some of my friends in Minnesota in a couple weeks." And she said "Excuse me?" And I said, "Okay, I was just in the water over there and I was playing, and I was like, oh, I love my friends, I want to hang out with my friends. I wish they were here. I want to go visit them, and so I'm going to go buy a plane ticket and visit them in a couple of weeks." And she said "Excuse me?" And I'm like "What? Are you not understanding? I'm going to buy a flight to go visit my friends in a couple of weeks." And she said "I'm so confused, because I don't think you realize that's not how it works anymore. You don't get to just decide what you want to do, when you want to do it, and how you spend your money is however you want to spend your money. That's not how it works because there's another person here now. I'm here now. And your decisions greatly impact me."

If you're a believer in Jesus, you need to know that the moment you came to know Jesus, you came to fall in love with him and trust in him, the Holy Spirit came into your life, a person came into your life. There is another person here now, and your decisions greatly impact him for better or for worse. And I don't know about you, but typically when I think about sin, I just think about the ways in which it impacts me. Because it's like, you know Satan, he wants to steal, kill, and destroy, and I don't want him to steal, kill, and destroy me, so I'm not going to fall into sin, because I don't want sin to hurt me. All the while, there's another person here now. And what you do impacts him for better or for worse, and scripture says that when you choose sin, you grieve him.

And it doesn't just say this in Ephesians chapter 4. There's actually another part in scripture where that same phrase is used. And I was surprised by where I found it, because it's actually in

Isaiah chapter 63, which typically you don't necessarily think of the Holy Spirit being active in the Old Testament, but he is. And that text says the exact same thing as it says here in Ephesians chapter 4, your sin grieves the Holy Spirit of God. And it's really a lesson that we can learn all across scripture, that from Genesis to Revelation to 2024, when the people of God sin, it grieves the Holy Spirit.

Now why? Why does our sin grieve the Holy Spirit? That's important to understand. So, looking again at the text, look at what it says in verse 30, Paul writes: **“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”** So that the day of redemption, that phrase here, is the day that we meet Jesus. It's the day that we're brought into life for all of eternity. So the spirit's goal for you is life. He has sealed you. He has placed you in the arms of your heavenly Father until the day you go and be fully present with the Father. That's his goal for you. His goal, the Holy Spirit's goal, is for you to experience an abundant life here and an eternal life later. The Holy Spirit's goal for you is life.

Now, why does Paul have these two phrases connected with one another? Do not grieve the Holy Spirit with whom you've been sealed for the day of redemption. Why are those connected? The Holy Spirit's goal for you is life.

This week, I was at a funeral, and do you know what was at that funeral? A whole lot of grieving, because death brings grief. And this scripture is saying the Holy Spirit's goal for you is life. He wants you to experience an abundant life here and eternal life later. And he knows that when you choose sin, he knows that you're choosing to bring death into your life. You're choosing to bring something into your life that can kill you, that can kill your joy, and it can kill your soul. So this text is saying the Holy Spirit wants you to experience life, and when he sees you experiencing death, he's grieved by it. You see, he's grieved by your sin because your sin brings death, and your death brings him great grief. And this is the first thing we can learn from this text: Do not grieve the spirit.

Now, next, we're going to see examples of what grieves the spirit. But it's not just these things, it's also the things that we looked at last week as we ended that chapter, as we ended that part of the text, these things also grieve the spirit. Paul writes this in verse 31: **“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”** Now, why does this come right after do not grieve the spirit? Don't grieve the spirit, so get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice. Well, all of those things are about disunity. They're about putting a dividing wall of either emotion or action between you and another person. And look at the contrast here in this verse compared to what Paul says at the beginning of Ephesians chapter 4, verses two and three, he writes this about the spirit: **² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.** You see, the Holy Spirit is all about bringing you to life, and about bringing us to unity. So when he sees disunity, he's deeply grieved.

In fact, if you don't know this, you need to know this, that Jesus prayed for you. Jesus had a prayer specifically for you. And if you don't know what that prayer is, you need to know this for the rest of your life. It should be clear to you that whenever someone says, “Hey, Jesus prayed

for you,” you're like “Yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about.” There's a moment in John chapter 17, when he specifically prays for you. Well what has he prayed for you and me about? He says this John 17, verses 20 and 21: **“My prayer is not for them alone. (Not just the disciples here) I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”**

So Jesus looks into the future and he sees you and me. And as he sees us, he prays one thing for us, and he prays for unity. That we would be unified with the father and that we would be unified with each other. His deep desire is unity. So, when we look at someone with bitterness, anger, rage, resentment, and unforgiveness, it deeply grieves him because it's opposed to what he wants. So this is the second thing we can learn here:

2. Do not give anger a home.

Do not give anger a home. It says here, “Get rid of all bitterness, anger and rage.” That phrase in the Greek for get rid of, could also be translated as, to carry off or to move from its place. It's this idea of, oh, that's not supposed to be there, so I'm going to pick it up and move it where it needs to go. And that right there, that interaction happens at our house all the time right now. Because I've got a three-year-old and a six-month-old at home, which means that stuff is just all over the place. It's a really busy house right now. And so frequently, probably every single day, I'm finding something in a place where it should not be. For instance, I'll be doing my laundry and all of a sudden I look down and there's an Elsa doll in my laundry. I'm like, “Why in the world is that there?” So I have to pick it up and take it where it's supposed to go. Or this happened just this week, I was mowing my lawn, not thinking twice about really anything, and I had something happen that I've never had happened before. I'm mowing my backyard, and as I'm mowing my backyard, all of a sudden a cloud of blue smoke comes up from my lawnmower. So I stopped my lawnmower and I looked around, and there's this pile of chalk that's laying in our grass. I'm like why in the world is that in our lawn? Like it has no business being there. So I had to stop mowing my lawn and pick up all the pieces of chalk and brought it where it needed to go. When something's not where it's supposed to be, you pick it up and you move it.

Now it's easy for me to do that with toys, it's a lot harder to do that with anger and resentment. But that's exactly what this text is saying. It's saying that whenever you see something that's not supposed to be there, you have got to pick it up and you move it. And although it's a lot easier with toys than it is anger, the principle remains the same. Because the principle is this, whenever I'm doing my laundry and I see an Elsa doll in there, I go, oh, that's not supposed to be there, how did it get there? I know exactly how it got there. My three-year-old Jaycee put it there. And since she put it there, it doesn't have to stay there, because she doesn't run this house, I run this house, so I get to decide where things go. And whenever you feel anger and resentment in your heart, and you see it in your heart, and you go, oh, that's not supposed to be there. Well, how did it get there? Well, the enemy wants to put it there. And if the enemy wants to put it there, it doesn't have to stay there, because the enemy doesn't run this house, the Lord runs this house, and he tells things where to go, not the enemy, so I'm going to pick it up and I'm going to move it out of here.

Now I know some of you, speaking of anger, some of you are just resigned to the fact that you are going to struggle with anger for the rest of your life because it just runs in your family. Like you can't really move it from your life because you know, your granddad was an angry person and your dad was an angry person, and so you're an angry person. Or maybe your mom was angry, so you're angry, and you're just resigned to this thought of, you know, anger just kind of runs in my blood. I just want to remind you that if you're a follower of Jesus, the blood of Jesus runs through your veins. Anger does not have to stay there. It does not have to exist in your life. It does not have to exist in your heart. You can remove it from your life. You can take it and move it.

Now, it does take a lot of work. And I've been trying to do that in my own life this week. I've been trying to remove anger from my life, and here's what it's looked like. You can't just say, "Hey, anger, get out of here!" You really kind of need to know why you're angry in the first place. Anger is an emotion that shows you what you care about. And so here's what it's looked like specifically for me this week. Two instances have been brought to mind as I've been working on this message. The first is, I was looking for baby wipes for one of my kids, so I was trying to clean up something and I found the baby wipes. And when I found the baby wipes, I found that the lid was up from the baby wipes, and that drives me nuts, because that means that baby wipe is just being dried out and it's totally worthless, we have to throw that away. And whenever I see that, I'm like "Adelie! What in the world?! You have so many amazing qualities, this just isn't one of them. Just close the lid. Just close it." And so that's going through my mind and heart in that moment, I'm like, okay, I don't want to be angry about this. Why am I angry about this? I'm angry about this because since the lid is open, it's drying out this baby wipe, which means we're going to have to buy more baby wipes. Why do I care about that? Because I really care about money. And I get concerned about money, and I think about money, and I love money, and I want to make sure that we have enough money, so I don't want us to be wasting money on baby wipes. So I'm angry at my wife because we just lost two cents over this dry baby wipe. And in that moment, I'm just going, "Lord, I'm angry because I love money, and I don't want to love money. So Father, would you just take this love for money and this anger over it, and would you just take it from me? I leave it at your feet." I tell you what, that helped me, it helped me.

Another moment that comes to mind in dealing with anger, I was teaching at a college ministry at a different school, so not here in Waco, and gave a message. And then after the message there was a group of college students that wanted to talk to me, and one of them eventually came up and started talking to me, and this is the only interaction that I remember, and he goes, "You know, that entire first half of your message, I really didn't understand anything you were saying, like it just was confusing." And then he goes, "In fact, what was even the subject of your message? I never really got it." And I'm like, in my mind, I'm like, I don't really like you very much. And even feelings of resentment, and like why did you come up here to tell me that? What in the world? Like I don't really like you. And I left that night thinking about that interaction. I was like, man, why do I resent him? Why do I not like him? I don't like him because I really want him to like me, and since he clearly didn't really like me, I started to not like him because I care what he thinks of me. This guy that I've never met before, I care what his opinion is of me, so I get angry at him when it's not a positive one.

So I'm just going, "Lord, would you take this anger and this resentment that I'm feeling towards this person? And I feel this way because I want him to like me, and I just want to be so satisfied in you and know what you say about me enough, that I don't have to worry about what this guy says to me, so Father, would you take it? I want this removed from my heart and placed at your feet." I tell you what, that helped me. And removing bitterness, anger, and resentment from your life, it's really hard work. And it's also really, really necessary work, because as followers of Jesus, we don't want to be wearing the wrong things. We don't want to be wearing bitterness and resentment and anger.

Again, it's like wearing this shirt. It's like you're wearing the clothing of the opposing team. It's like you're wearing the clothing that the enemy wants you to wear. Because scripture tells us exactly the clothing that Satan wants us to wear. It tells us plain and clear what Satan wants to do in order to achieve victory over you in your life.

Paul writes this in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, he says this, **"¹⁰Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, ¹¹ in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.** You see, Jesus prays, "Lord, would you keep them unified?" Satan hears that and he goes, "Okay, Jesus' goal is unity, therefore my goal is disunity." And Paul tells us here in scripture, Satan's scheme in your life will be unforgiveness. Satan's scheme in your life will be bitterness. Satan's scheme in your life will be resentment. Don't let him win. In your marriage, don't let him win. With your siblings, don't let him win. With your kids, don't let him win. With your roommates, don't let him win. With your ex, don't let him win. With your business partner, don't let him win. And I just want you to know how he's going to try to win in your life. He's going to try to convince you that your division is deserved, that your anger is best, that your slander is warranted, that your resentment is justified over that person. And here's what will happen, you'll believe that lie and years and years and years will go by of you harboring resentment in your heart, and the only person that will lose is you.

See, bitterness and resentment will eat you alive from the inside out. I've heard it said before that unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. See unforgiveness only kills you, it only hurts you, and Satan wants to kill you. And some of the ways that he wants to do that is division through resentment, anger, and unforgiveness. And when you hold on to resentment in your heart, Satan is cheering and the spirit is grieving. Don't let him claim victory over you in your life. So point number two, second thing we can learn here, is do not give anger a home.

Okay, last verse. It says this in verse 32. Paul says, **"³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."** And I love here that Paul writes to the church in Ephesus and he just goes, "Hey, forgive one another." In other words, he's saying, "Hey, those people that you're doing life with, like the people in the church in Ephesus, they're going to hurt you, so you're going to have to forgive them. I just want to preemptively tell you, please forgive them, because they're going to do things that hurt you." And I love that he says this, because I think sometimes we don't live life in awareness of this reality.

And I've seen this happen a lot, because as a pastor, I've gotten to officiate a good amount of weddings, which means I've gotten to sit through a lot of rehearsal dinners. And I have just learned over time that most speeches at rehearsal dinners sound the exact same. There are some that are unique, most of them are not, because most of them sound like this: "The way you look at him is amazing. There is just a beaming bright light in your eye. Like you are so deeply in love with him, like when you look at him. I just wish I could find a man that made me look at him the way that you look at him, and you found your person. Like he is perfect for you, and you just really complete each other." And then a lot of times guys say something like this, "You know, you were kind of a mess, and then you met her, and then you figured your life out. It's been amazing to watch. You guys are perfect for each other and I'm still kind of a mess, but I'm just waiting on that girl who is going to figure my life out for me." A lot of the times it just sounds like that. "You guys are perfect for each other."

And then I step up to do the ceremony the next day, and I'm just like, "Hey, look deeply into each other's eyes. Look at each other. I just want you to know that the person you're looking at right now, you're going to have to forgive them more often than you have to forgive anyone else on earth, because they are going to hurt you more than anyone else is. And by the way, marriage is awesome, it's a gift from the Lord. And, whenever you pair your brokenness with another broken person, that doesn't equal wholeness, that equals a lot more brokenness. So they're going to hurt you, because hurt people end up hurting you." Which is why I love that Paul just says here, "Hey just approach life with the mentality of you're going to have to forgive people, because people will hurt you." And he says, "Be kind, be considerate, forgive one another." And if he just said that it wouldn't be all that helpful. Because if you just told me after I've been wrong, just, "Hey, Nate, just be kind to them." I'm not going to want to be kind to them. The why behind the kindness and the compassion and the forgiveness, the why behind it is where the power is. Which is why point number three, third thing we have to understand, is this:

3. Forgive as Christ has forgiven you.

And when we talk about forgiveness, we're talking about big things, little things, and small things. We're talking things like, small things like forgiving your roommate for not doing the dishes when they said they were going to do the dishes. And we're talking about big things. Big things like I don't even want to give you an example in order to distract you. If I say big things and you think that's you, you know what I'm talking about. Some of you, in fact, many of you have maybe been hurt by big things, painful things, and they've marked your life.

Maybe they happened this week. Maybe they happened 50 years ago. I just want to start by saying I'm so deeply sorry. I can't imagine how that's felt. And I also deeply believe that God is hurt by those things. God is grieved over those things. He doesn't want sin to negatively impact your life. But I also believe that the depth of your pain doesn't change your necessity to forgive. The depth of your pain may change your desire to forgive, but the depth of your pain doesn't change the necessity to forgive, because as Jesus' people, we forgive people. And since we've been forgiven of much, we go and forgive much. Because when you see all that Jesus has done for you in order to forgive you, you can't leave that with a hard heart going, I'm not going to forgive them.

But the problem for us is, distance from a thing can create numbness to that thing. Distance from seeing a thing can create numbness to that thing. And here's an example of what that has looked like in my life. My daughter just turned three last week. So that means that three years ago our life totally changed. And one of the things that totally changed about me is that I view my wife totally different. Like how I view her before she gave birth to now, is like you are a superhuman. After seeing all that you had to go through, I'm like, you are unbelievable. Like the fact that you did all that for us is just amazing. And I just remember those feelings that day and the days after I was like, "Adelie, anything you want, you got it. Since you went through all that, I'll do anything you want. You want a back massage? Done. You want me to get up in the middle of the night and change the baby's diaper? Done. You want me to take out a loan so we can go pick up Panera and we can eat it and I'll still be hungry? Done. I will do anything you want. Even that. Even that. Because you went through all that, I'll do whatever you need me to do." And then yesterday, she's like "Hey, can you take out the trash?" And in my mind, I'm like, can you take out the trash? Yeah, I know. Yeah.

You see distance from seeing a thing can make you numb to that thing. May we never, ever, ever get numb to the cross of Jesus Christ. You see, some of you, you've been followers of Jesus for years and you saw the cross, like you experienced the cross and everything that Jesus did for you. But now as the years go by, you're like, yeah, I'm just kind of used to it. We can never get used to what Jesus did in order to forgive you. And if you need some reminding, well let me remind you. Here's what Jesus did for you. Scripture says that while you were dead in your sins, Jesus was in heaven. He was in paradise. But since he so loved you, he chose to leave paradise and to enter into this earth as a baby. He was born in a manger amidst smelly and stinky animals.

And more than that, he chose to be born into a carpenter's family. So he spent 30 years of his life working with wood, using his hands, sweating a hard working man's life. And then after those 30 years, he spent three years in ministry where all he spent doing was healing people, and serving people, and caring for people, and teaching people, and he sought and saved the lost. And he served all the people around him until most of the people around him, turned their back on him. In fact, one of his very best friends in the world, who he had spent every day with for three years, turned him over to the Roman soldiers. And the Roman soldiers took him to be tried and they said, "This man claims to be a king. He's not a king. He's a crook and we should treat him like one." And then they did. They spat in his face, they beat his body, and then the God of the world, he came as a man, and they took his clothes off and he was naked. And then they took his hands, they tied him up to a beam, and then they had a cat of nine tails, a whip that had shards of glass and pottery and rocks on it, and they whipped him 39 times until the flesh on his back was almost completely gone.

And then they said, "Hey, Jesus, pick up your cross and carry it till Golgotha, the place of the skull where we're going to murder you." And then Jesus, the one who had the power to speak the words of life and to bring someone back to life, he was willing to be so powerless in that moment by their blows, that he couldn't even carry the cross up to the place where he'd be crucified. So he crawled to Golgotha. And then once he got there, they laid out his hands and his feet, and they nailed his hands and his feet to two beams of wood, and then they raised him up on a cross to die. And as they were there in front of him, they said, "If you were God, you wouldn't have to

die like this. If you were really God, those nails wouldn't keep you to the cross.” Little did they know those nails were not keeping him to the cross, his love for them was.

And as they mock him, and they had a crown of thorns on his head, blood is streaming down his face. He screams, “It is finished!” You know what was finished? Your forgiveness. And then he gave up his last breath and then he died. And my bet is, if you were there on that day, and if I were there on that day at Golgotha, the place where our Savior died, and we were standing at his feet, looking up at Jesus where he was so brutally beaten that he didn't even look like a human anymore, I think we'd say, “Man, if you did all that for me, I'll do anything for you.”

And so he says great, forgive your sister. Forgive your mom. Forgive your dad. Forgive your ex. Forgive your business partner. And if you're a believer in Jesus, your answer cannot be no. And if it is, maybe you haven't experienced forgiveness, because we are a people who have been forgiven of much. And if we'd been forgiven of much, we forgive much, because as Jesus' people, we forgive people. That's who we are or I should say, that's who we're supposed to be.

But the longer I do ministry, most of the times the more encouraged I become, but sometimes it's the more discouraged I become. Because the longer I'm in ministry, the more I see resentment and unforgiveness just dwell within the church. Because I've seen things like this happen so many times. Something like, you'll be placed in a life group, and whether you've been in that life group for a month or 10 years, someone will say something in that group that will hurt you. And so you will leave that group that night. You'll leave the group chat that night or the next night, and you will never go back to that group, and you will hope and pray that you don't see those people ever again in Waco.

Or you'll go to Harris Creek. You'll be a member at Harris Creek or someone from the stage will say something that man, maybe it was a total miss, or maybe it just rubbed you the wrong way. Or maybe we sing a song you don't like, or we do something in kids ministry that you don't like. And so you'll pick up your family and you'll go to another church and you'll resent this church, or even another church, without seeking reconciliation from that place. See that stuff is normal for church attenders. That stuff cannot be normal for Jesus followers, because we cannot wear resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness, because that's not who we are, because that's not what we've received.

So as Christians, we need to really get used to two phrases. In your life, you need to be used to saying these two things and hearing these two things. And I hope you hear these two things a lot here at Harris Creek. The first phrase is this: “Will you forgive me for _____?” And the second phrase is this: “Yes, I forgive you for _____.” We need to get used to that. We need to get used to reconciliation because we don't want resentment to dwell in our heart. See, forgiveness is not optional for the believer.

Now, I also want to say forgiveness does not mean forgetting the wrong they did. Forgiveness doesn't mean you don't put boundaries in place. Forgiveness doesn't mean there aren't any changes to your relationship. Forgiveness doesn't mean you just allow yourself to get run over time and time again. But forgiveness does mean Satan doesn't get to win. Forgiveness does mean Jesus has forgiven me of my sin, therefore, I forgive you of your sin. Forgiveness means what C.

S. Lewis said. He said, "God forgave the inexcusable in us, so we forgive the inexcusable in others." That's who we are.

So, in summary, point number one: Do not grieve the spirit. Point number two: Do not give anger a home. And point number three: forgive as Christ has forgiven you.

And to close, you know I'm always rather shocked whenever I hear stories of people going and meeting with their doctor and their doctor kind of looks at their vitals and says, "Hey, if you don't stop doing this thing, you're going to die. If you don't stop smoking, it's going to lead to your death. Or if you don't stop eating this way, it's going to lead to your death." And it always surprises me that people leave that conversation, and then they don't stop smoking, and then they die. It's like you were just told what's going to kill you, and yet their love for that thing was more than their love for their own life. They loved smoking more than they loved living, or they loved eating a certain way more than they loved living. And it just always shocks me that people can hear, "Hey, if you don't stop this, it's going to kill you."

And I'm just up here this morning, not as a doctor, but hopefully just as a friend to tell you, you have received that warning. You've received a warning that is just as urgent as any of those things. And I just don't want you to ignore it. Because you've received a warning in scripture. Jesus said this really over and over again. He says, "If you don't forgive, it's going to kill you. If you don't forgive, then you won't be forgiven." Those are Jesus' words, not mine. If you hold on to resentment and bitterness and anger and unforgiveness, it's going to lead to your death. It's that urgent.

So my question is, what are you going to do with that? Some of you, you've been wearing things that you should not be wearing. You've been wearing bitterness and anger and rage and resentment and unforgiveness. And I know that for some of you, someone else put it there. It doesn't have to stay there though. And I don't know what you've done. I don't know how deeply you've been hurt. I know there's a lot of people in this room that have been hurt deeply. And I bet you've been maybe harboring unforgiveness potentially for years. And I don't know who it's been with, maybe it's been with someone who's even no longer with us. Maybe it's a parent. Maybe it's a child. Maybe it's a sibling. I don't know. I don't know who that is for you. But I do know that even if you've been harboring unforgiveness for years, that can stop today. You can take off those clothes today. You can wear something new.

I was talking to someone up here after the first service, and they said, "It feels impossible to forgive this person." It is on your own. You're not on your own. Because when you became a believer in Jesus, someone else is there. The Holy Spirit is there, and he has the ability to change your heart from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. You don't have to live the rest of your life harboring unforgiveness, because as followers of Jesus, we're going to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and we want to follow in the forgiveness of Jesus. Let me pray that we would.

Father, sometimes life is so, so hard because sin harms us. Specifically, sin from other people harms us. What they said harms us, what they did harms us. And whether it was 5 minutes ago or 50 years ago, we can still be carrying around bitterness and resentment and rage towards that person. But God, I pray that your Holy Spirit would do a new work today, a fresh work today,

that as I said, as your scripture says, would you change our heart from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh?

Would we start having feelings for that person that is different than what we even believe we could experience? Feelings like I'm not wishing their worst. I'm not wishing harm on them because I've forgiven them, and that not because I'm a good person, but because I'm a very, very bad person, and I know what it feels like to have those sins be forgiven. And since Jesus forgave me from what I've done, I want to forgive them for what they've done.

So Father, would you do that now? Would you change our heart now? And Father, may we even see stories and hear stories of reconciliation that seem impossible now.

And God, I know there's also another group of people in this room who they're not thinking about how they've been hurt, they're thinking about how they've hurt others. I pray you'd give them the courage and the soft heart to go and make the call, or meet with someone face to face and say, "Hey, I hurt you by _____, will you forgive me for _____?" And may we be a people of unity because your spirit is a spirit of unity.

And Father, I just pray that your spirit would bring life and not death in us. And that we'd flee from our sin and cling to you. And Father, we just want to rejoice in the truth. That's more important than any other truth. It's this truth that Jesus is alive and with us and for us. And it's in his name we pray, amen.