

“Forgive Us Our Trespasses”

October 15, 2017

**Our Savior’s Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Bill Mann**

Today, I want to say a few words to you about the things we carry with us in our lives and also the things we let go. In the Bible, Jesus talks about forgiveness--the forgiveness God offers us and His expectation that we need to forgive one another. Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer we say the words: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive one another.” So, let’s talk about forgiveness. How many of you have struggled with this issue of forgiveness?—raise your hand if you have. Open up your bulletin and take out the “Peacemaker Brochure.” There’s some great information in here. “Peacemakers” is a Christian ministry that seeks to bring peace and forgiveness into conflicted situations. Take a look at the inside. Do you see the ½ circle called “The Slippery Slope.” There are three ways that we respond to conflict—(1) The Escape Response; (2) The Peacemaking Response; and (3) The Attack Response. Over the last two weeks we have had some dramatic examples of each. Let’s see if you can identify the following quotes ...

QUOTE #1: “We are defined by our love, our caring, and our courage. We cannot be defined by the evil that threatens us or the violence that incites such terror.” President Trump said those words in Las Vegas. They are good words. I don’t know what twisted conflict led to the attack response at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino—but I see it as an extreme example of an attack response. A more common attack response is simply trashing someone behind their back.

QUOTE #2: “Users of AuroraBrite Anti-Aging Serum are experiencing anti-aging results that before now were only possible through surgeons.” Those of you who are HGTV fans know that Joanna of “Chip and

Joanna” from the reality show “Fixer Upper” has called it quits. She was forced to choose between the TV show and her line of beauty products. So, no more Chip and Joanna fixing up old houses in Texas. What kind of response is that?—Escape!

QUOTE #3: “I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.” These are the words of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians. Obviously, two women in the church were at odds with one another. Paul says, “Help these two ladies resolve their conflicts and forgive one another.

The need for forgiveness comes from the fact that there is conflict. In marriages, in churches, in families, in schools, in the workplace—conflict happens. In fact there’s a Bible verse about that, isn’t there?—Jesus, said, “Wherever two or three are gathered together there’s gonna be conflict.” No! That’s not how it goes. The real Bible verse is: “Wherever two or three are gathered together **IN MY NAME, I AM WITH THEM.**” (Matthew 18:20) What sets us apart as Christians is not the absence of conflict. What sets us apart as Christians is the fact that Jesus is present—even in the conflict. In fact, I believe that God often uses conflict to help us grow.

Where does conflict come from? Conflict comes from our desires. Our desires—good or bad, right or wrong—these desires of our heart are at the root of most conflict. I don’t know about you, but I feel that a lot of conflict happens in my life when I try to control things—when my desires turn into demands. I have this desire, what I think is good and right. I add to that my need to control. The equation is simple” My Desire + My Need to Control = Demand which results in Conflict. How do you break that equation? The only way that’s going to happen is if I renounce my desires and let go of my need to control and put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ. I know a pastor whose son is getting married. He’s engaged to a young lady who is not a Christian. This pastor is very concerned. He knows that faith is at the foundation of a Christian marriage. He’s worried about his son. He’s tried talking to his son. He’s tried demanding that the wedding take place in the church. He’s threatened not to be a part of the wedding. In fact the relationship between this pastor and his son had reached the point of estrangement.

Now, finally, after a lot of prayer and soul-searching, my pastor friend has realized, “I have to let go of my demands. I have to give this to God.” We are not in control and when, in our relationships we try to take control and make demands, that leads to conflict. And the only way to heal conflict is through forgiveness.

So, let’s talk about forgiveness. Here are three things forgiveness is not—(1) Forgiveness is not for the faint of heart. Forgiveness requires courage and determination. (2) Forgiveness is not a compromise of morality. Don’t ever think that God’s going to confuse his justice with his mercy. The murderer will not get away with murder. The child molester will not get away with abuse. God’s will never compromise his justice. (3) Forgiveness is not merely avoiding conflict. There are a lot of us, especially in the church, who want to avoid conflict. So we skirt around issues of conflict. Sometimes it’s the right thing to do to overlook a minor offense. But simply avoiding the conflict is not the same as forgiveness.

What is forgiveness? How do you do it? Take a look at the Peacemaking Brochure again. Right under the words “Getting to the Heart”, you’ll see “The Seven A’s of Confession” and “The Four Promises of Forgiveness.” It is worth our time reading these and taking them to heart. “The Seven A’s of Confession”: ADDRESS everyone involved. AVOID if, but, and maybe. ADMIT specifically. ACKNOWLEDGE the hurt. ACCEPT the consequences. ALTER your behavior. ASK for forgiveness. This, my friends, is not easy. It requires you to be vulnerable and open up your heart to another person.

Now let’s read “The Four Promises of Forgiveness”: (1) I will not dwell on this incident. (2) I will not bring this incident up and use it against you. (3) I will not talk to others about this incident. (4) I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship. Wow! Can a person really do this? I think sometimes, for me, my heart is hardened or there is so much bitterness, that I have to just begin by saying the words and going through the motions, and somehow, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness comes along afterward in God’s time. And I can release the hurt. Because forgiveness is really about release, isn’t it? Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free

and realizing that you were the prisoner. I like what Nelson Mandela said when he was released from prison after 27 years. He said, “As I walked out the door to the gate that would lead to my freedom I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind I’d still be in prison.”

Before I close I just want to share this story that someone sent me. A young lady name Corey was taking a class in religion given by her teacher Dr. Randy White. Dr. White was well known for his elaborate object lessons. One day Corey walked into class and knew they were in for a fun day. On the wall was a big target and on a nearby table was a pile of many darts. Dr. White told the students to draw a picture of someone they disliked or someone who had made them angry, and he would allow them to throw darts at the person’s picture. Corey’s girlfriend drew a picture of a girl who had stolen her boyfriend. Another friend drew a picture of his little brother. Corey drew a picture of a former friend, putting in a lot of details, even down to the pimples on his face. Then the class lined up to start throwing darts. There was a lot of laughter and hilarity. Some of the students threw their darts with such force that the pictures were ripping apart. Mary was looking forward to her turn. She was filled with disappointment when Dr. White, because of time limits, asked the students to return to their seats. As Mary sat thinking about how angry she was because she didn’t have a chance to throw any darts at her target, Dr. White began removing the targets from the wall. Underneath each target was a picture of Jesus. A hush fell over the room as each student viewed the mangled pictures of Jesus. Holes and jagged marks covered his face and his eyes were pierced. Dr. White said only these words: “In as much as you have done it unto the least of these my brothers, you have done it unto me.” (Matthew 25:40) No other words were necessary. The tear-filled eyes of each student focused only on the picture of Christ.

So now, I’m going to ask you to bow your heads and say the words of the Lord’s Prayer. This time search your heart and if someone has offended you in the past or even now in the present, “Will you take the steps to forgive them, today, as God in Christ has forgiven you?”