

Our Father, Who is in heaven; Hallowed be Your name;

Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

the *Lord's* prayer

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

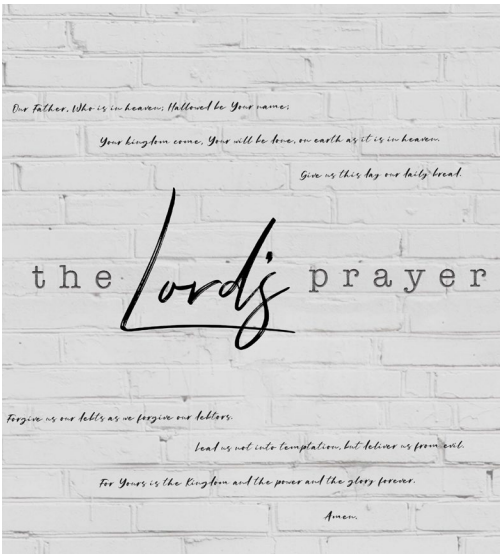
For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen.

Sermon Growth Guide

July 31, 2022

Forgiveness



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The Lord's Prayer - Forgiveness

Matthew 6:9-13

Key Verse: Matthew 6:12

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Big Idea: Forgiven people forgive people.

Foundations

Christianity places a high value on the idea of forgiveness. It's hard to overestimate the weight of our sin: “for the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) and “no one is righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10).

Without outside, effectual forgiveness, only despair remains in Christianity, for all would be condemned.

“I have come that you may have life,” Jesus declares (John 10:10). Jesus, our Savior, forgives us. Is forgiveness a chore for Jesus? Does Jesus begrudgingly forgive His people?

Pastor Tim writes, “It delights the heart of Jesus when you bring your sins to Him for forgiveness.” Think of that! You coming to Jesus in repentance, filled to the brim with sin that condemns you to death, delights Jesus! Why? Because “the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

The payment has already been paid; the only thing left to do is submit to the Lordship of the one who saves you and loves you. O, that you would sense the joy Jesus experiences when you turn to Him for forgiveness.

And what do forgiven people do? Forgiven people forgive people. O, that your heart might be free in the salvation of the Lord! Open your time together rejoicing in the forgiveness of Jesus!

Understanding God's Word

Together, pray Matthew 6:9–13.

How does Pastor Tim describe “debts”?

What does verse 12 imply about God and about us?

What stands out to you in The Lord's Prayer this week?

Applying God's Word

Forgiven people forgive people.

Do you walk your life as a forgiving person? Consider breaking into groups of 2-3 and praying prayers of forgiveness, forgiving the debts against you. In this process, may you feel the freedom that forgiving brings to your soul.

Witnessing God's Word

How can you walk as a person of forgiveness? Who can you treat differently this week, knowing that you have truly forgiven them in your heart?

Walk this week in the joy of being a forgiven child of God who forgives those who wrong you.

Two weeks ago, I visited a man at his house after the sudden loss of his wife to sit together and plan the service. As I walked in the front door, there was this cat about the size of a small bobcat staring at me from around a corner of the hall looking at me like this. It's a Maine Coon. The man said, "Don't worry, Tim. He's very forgiving." I guess he and his wife had been worshiping at home one Sunday when I said a few uncomplimentary words about cats, and their cat had been listening. I was glad for the forgiveness, but the cat and I kept an eye on each other. No, it's a very nice cat. I love cats anyway. I'm glad there are cats in the world. But I love forgiveness even more. In our series on **The Lord's Prayer**, today we take up the next verse, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). **Forgiveness.**

What if there were no forgiveness in the world? Not all religions put the same premium on forgiveness as Christianity. Some subscribe to a cycle of karma. Whatever you do wrong will come back to bite you eventually, either this life or the next. What goes around comes around. That's mostly Hinduism and Buddhism, but it is very popular in our culture right now. Send out good vibes to get good vibes. What if you accidentally send out bad vibes? Other religions say life is a trial and a judgment, so try to do more good than evil before your deeds hit the scales. There are large branches of Christianity that continue to get sucked into this error. But I think I came into contact with this idea most directly when I started studying Islam. When the attacks happened on 9-11, we were all trying to understand. I was told these were religious zealots. What religion inspires this kind of mass murder suicide? I learned that in strictest terms, their version of Islam has no forgiveness, no way to wipe the slate clean. Allah would judge their deeds. So, once you committed a sin, you had to do radical things to try to make up for it on the other side.

The attackers went out partying the night before. They were backed into a corner—only a suicide martyrdom attacking the Christian western world would be enough to outweigh their crimes against the Quran.

No forgiveness. What desperate despair. I just think of my own latest sins. How would it feel to know these offenses could never be forgiven, never removed, never expunged from the record before God? Just take a minute and think about the most recent egregious sin you committed. I'm sure you have a list of excuses, but there it sits, ugly as sin. Imagine no way to find forgiveness. Praise be to God, there is! In Christ, through Christ, because of Christ there is no sin that cannot be forgiven. Jesus has won forgiveness for our sins. Jesus has paid the penalty we owed. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed'" (1 Peter 2:24). When Jesus talks about forgiveness, this is what He is talking about. The forgiveness He won for us by going to the cross. Without it, we would be utterly lost.

Jesus teaches us to pray: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). Forgive us, Lord. Jesus uses the word "debts" here in His Sermon on the Mount. When He taught the disciples privately in Luke, He used the word "sins." No real difference. Jesus and His disciples were used to talking about the debt of their sin. Sin causes debt. This isn't an economic term Jesus is using here in Matthew. This is not a Dave Ramsey course on Financial Peace. Sin causes debt. The wages of sin is death. Jesus paid that debt on our behalf. He trains us to remember that constantly in prayer.

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Amen.

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). Here we see most directly in the Lord’s Prayer the intersection between our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with one another. It begins with seeking forgiveness from God. Forgive us, Lord. Forgive me, Lord. This is why we move through a moment of confession in every worship service. This is our proper posture before the Lord. Have we been forgiven once and for all when we are in Christ, for all sins, past, present and future? Yes. The Lord will not turn us away. You are forgiven even for sins you don’t know you committed. But in our continuing walk with Christ and our continuing growth in holiness and likeness to Christ, we continue to battle with sin. And so we continue to ask for and receive forgiveness. Martin Luther said, “In the presence of God everyone must duck his head and come into the joy of forgiveness only through the low door of humility.” Vertical.

Horizontal. Forgiven by God, we forgive others. Jesus tells a number of parables about this, and we see Paul talk about it again and again in his letters. Our forgiveness by God of an eternal, life-sized, eternity-sized debt ought to release us to forgive others around us who have wronged us and formed a debt with us. It is so related, the two run together like rails of a train track. You don’t have one without the other. “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). The two are inexorably tied, inseparable. The vertical and the horizontal. In fact, Jesus goes on about this as soon as he’s done teaching the Lord’s Prayer. Look at the next verses, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15). Now, don’t get confused by how strong the tie is. Your forgiveness by God is not dependent on how well you do at

forgiving others, as if you earn your forgiveness by forgiving others. We know that the wages of sin is death, but the “free gift of God is eternal life.” You don’t earn it. Forgiveness is a gift earned by Jesus and given by Jesus. But don’t miss how strongly Jesus ties the two together. If we have been forgiven, so we must forgive. Forgiven people forgive people.

Forgiveness isn’t easy. To forgive is to set aside the debt of harm that has been done to us. It doesn’t mean walking back into the harm or maintaining a relationship that subjects you to repeated abuse, but that we, you, I, decide not to carry that debt around in us. We harbor no ill will toward the person who sinned against us. If they want to reconcile with us and make up for their mistake in this way or that, fine. All the better! But forgiveness doesn’t depend on that. It is something we do. We wait for no retribution. We leave it to God to avenge. We pay, in a sense, the debt that the wrong opened up inside of us. That’s hard for us, but it is healthy. It has been said that to harbor resentment is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. It only rots you out in your core when you fail to forgive. But it isn’t easy, and we lose patience, and we run out of energy for it. That’s why Peter asked Jesus, how many times. “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times’” (Matthew 18:21-22). Which, of course, meant all the times. Where do you find the strength? From your own being forgiven by God.

It’s hard for us. We assume it’s hard for Jesus. We run out of patience; we assume God runs out of patience with us. But he does not. Jesus delights in forgiving your sins. Do you believe me? Jesus delights in forgiving your sins. You need to know this, or you will

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run and hide your sins from Him. Jesus delights in forgiving your sins. Let me give you four arguments for that. First, Jesus bought the forgiveness of your sins at enormous personal pain and sacrifice. He wants you to have it. Imagine you are a missionary doctor. You have made huge sacrifices to get medical help and medicine to a people living in South America. You left your home. You sacrificed your career. You risked your life and spent everything you had just to get this medicine to this people who are sick and dying. What if they don't take it? How does that feel? They don't trust you enough to take the medicine, and you continue to watch them suffer and die in sickness. Then one of them comes, trusts you enough, takes the medicine and is healed. How do you feel now? You fought for that! You sacrificed for that! You wanted that with all your heart! So it is with Jesus who came, sacrificed, died and rose again to win your free gift of grace—your forgiveness. It delights the heart of Jesus when you bring your sins to Him for forgiveness.

Second, Jesus is building a family with you in it, and He is eager to see it come. It gives Him joy to see it coming. Jesus, as it says in Hebrews, "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus' whole mission is driven by the joy set before Him—you forgiven and restored and adopted in the family of God for eternal life. And not just Jesus, but all of heaven rejoices when you ask forgiveness and your sins are forgiven. "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). Angels dance when you confess and receive forgiveness.

Third, you are part of Christ's own body. You are the body and He is the head of it. When your arm is wounded, when your lungs have an infection, when your leg is broken, how do you

feel toward that part of your body? You want it healed! You're not mad at it. Dumb toe! Why did you bang against that table? You deserve it! I'm going to cut you off and leave you in your foolish pain! No. Jesus sees you as part of His own body. You are! He rejoices when you repent. He delights to bring you forgiveness.

Fourth, Jesus holds the authority of the judge. He is the one to declare your forgiveness, your righteousness. When we refuse to accept His judgment, that we are forgiven, we usurp his authority and power. We make ourselves the judge in His place. Forgiveness is possible with God. It is won by Jesus. He does not tire in forgiving your sins. He delights in the redemption you receive by His merciful hand. So, be renewed in your own forgiveness, and be renewed in your own strength and resources to forgive others.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). John Stott said, "Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling." Having been forgiven so much, forgive others. Forgiven people forgive people. The vertical leads to the horizontal. In fact, they are tied together inexorably. Up and across. There is no forgiveness without this. No forgiveness apart from this. Forgiveness is possible because of the cross. Jesus paid the debt. Jesus paid the penalty. Jesus paid the wages of sin by His death so that you and I might have, and even share, the free gift of eternal life through Him.

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