

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Forgiveness Prayer*  
**SERIES:** *Whoever Hears These Words*  
**SCRIPTURES:** *Matthew 6:5-15*  
**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*  
**DATE:** *7 - 14 - 2019*

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*\*Credit to Scot McKnight (Jesus Creed), John Ortberg, Ken Bailey, Lewis Smedes for valuable insights regarding this message!*

Well good morning, it is so great to worship with you.

I was reading a story this past week about Simon Wiesenthal (**PIC OF SIMON**), a Jewish prisoner in a concentration camp in Poland in the 1940's. He recall's an incident that happened to him...One day he was assigned to clean out garbage from a barn the Germans had turned into a hospital for their wounded soldiers. Toward evening, a nurse took Wiesenthal and led him to a young German soldier who had just been brought into the hospital. Fatally wounded, bandaged, bleeding. The young soldier was about 21 years old. He grabbed Wiesenthal's hand and clutched it. He said, he had to talk to a Jew; he could not die before he confessed the sins he had committed against countless Jews...and he had to be forgiven by a Jew.

So he told Wiesenthal a horrible tale of how his battalion had gunned down Jews, parents, children, who were trying to escape from a house set on fire by the Germans.

Wiesenthal sat by and listened to the dying man's story. As the young man finished his story, Wiesenthal jerked his hand away and walked out of the barn. No word was spoken. No forgiveness was given. Wiesenthal could not, forgive.

Years later in recalling this story Wiesenthal poses this question: **“What would you have done?”**

The more I thought about this story, the more I realized, I honestly, do not know. I do not understand stories like this. To speak to Wiesenthals situation, without his personal experience would be irresponsible and speaking in ignorance. Fortunately, for most of us forgiveness doesn't begin with situations like this. We begin with:

A co-worker who speaks about us behind our back.

A careless friend who never brings back a borrowed item.

A doctor who gives the wrong diagnosis.

An athletic official who has a bad game.

Weisenthal's story and his questions, at the very least, bring us to our topic for this morning. Forgiveness. Many of us feel the same way Wiesenthal felt (on a much lesser scale), when we are unfairly hurt often in far less horrible ways. And our hate/retaliation/vengeance at the injustice done, is the only response we have. We see it the world all around us. Is there a better way?

**Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

We're right in the middle of our series called, "whoever hears these words" (**SERIES TITLE SLIDE**)...studying the Sermon on the Mount.

And we've actually been going phrase by phrase through "The Lord's Prayer." And this is our fifth and final week looking at what Jesus had to say regarding prayer.

This morning as we close our study, I'd like to talk a little bit about forgiveness. It showed up in our scripture text last week. But didn't really have time to say much about it.

Last week we looked at the first half of that statement (**Forgive us our debts**). A concept called confession. Confession is how we begin to deal with our failures, sins, short-comings. When I've screwed up, I need to confess, because it begins the healing process.

This morning, we want to look at the second half of that statement.

**...as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

Forgiveness is how we deal with, find healing for the failures, sins, short-comings of others, against us.

C.S.Lewis **"Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive....I am not trying to tell you what I could do, I am telling you what Christianity is. I did not invent it. And there right in the middle of it, I find "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." (Mere Christianity)**

The key to understanding forgiveness, it is this...

### **1. Understanding how much you have been forgiven.**

The secret to forgiving, the motivation behind, is recognizing how much you have been forgiven.

Jesus tells a story in **Matthew 18:23-35** –

He says, forgiveness is like a King. Wealthy, powerful. One of his servants is dragged before him, into the King's courtroom. And thrown at the King's feet. Owes him 10 thousand bags of gold, 20 years wages. An enormous amount of money. But the servant doesn't have the money to pay up. So he throws himself at the King's feet,

“think of my family, my young children. Please, O sovereign one, just a little more time.” He begs for mercy.

The Kings court, advisors snicker from the sidelines. Pitiful, hopeless, wretch. There’s no way he’ll ever pay back that debt. The King stares down at him. But as he stares, his face becomes soft and gentle. Quietly and kindly the King says the unthinkable, **“You don’t owe a thing. Your debt is forgiven.”** *Go and tell your wife, everything will be ok. Then come back and work for me again.”*

The court, advisors silent. The servant is stunned. Nobody saw this coming. It’s an incredible scene.

Word of the Kings unbelievable forgiveness, spreads through the Kingdom like wildfire. Such extravagant forgiveness has never been witnessed before. The story is all over Newspapers, FOX, CNN, Twitter, Facebook...so unbelievable. They’re making movies about this story. Taylor Swift (Johnny Cash) writes songs about this story. “You don’t owe a thing. Your debt is forgiven.”

(Ortberg)

But the story isn’t over.

A couple weeks later. This same servant has workers of his own. He is settling accounts with his own workers. They meet up outside a local coffee shop. A similar scene, but on much smaller scale, with a much smaller debt. Only 3 months wages. But the worker does not have the money to pay his debt. Of course the townsfolk who are standing around...assume they know what’s about to happen.

“You don’t owe a thing. Your debt is forgiven.”

But instead he grabs his worker by the throat, begins to choke him and demands payment. *“Pack up your things. You worthless slave.”* He has the local officers, drag his worker away in hand cuffs, publicly humiliated.

The townsfolk are stunned. *“How could a man who had been forgiven so much be so incredibly unforgiving? How could one who had received so much grace and mercy for his own debt, not show grace and mercy?”* **What would you have done?**

The King finds out what has happened. He calls his servant back in. *“You wicked servant. I canceled your debt. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your worker, in the same way I had mercy on you.”* In his anger the King hands his servant over to the jailers to be tortured and thrown in jail until he could pay his debt.

(Ortberg)

And then Jesus clarifies for those listening the point of the story... **“This is how my heavenly father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”**

See this is a story about you about you and me, and how much we have been forgiven by the King.

There is a God who made us. Created us to live a certain way. As a human being, I have incurred a debt of failure to live the way I was created to live.

Every time I lost my temper with my kids I incurred a debt. Every time I gave a lustful glance. Every time I harbored bitterness or said hurtful/untrue things about another person. Every time I indulged myself in food, athletics, entertainment. Every time I thought, I’m better than someone else. Every time I wished I had someone else car, house, life. By the way, I could keep going up here. It took me about 2 mins to come up with every example on that list. I have incurred a debt against the King.

And then one day on a cross God said, “You don’t owe a thing. Your debt is forgiven.”

That’s why the story of the Bible is called the Good News. It’s an unbelievable story. It’s a story about imperfect people forgiven an enormous debt. This recognition is life-changing.

Forgiveness starts with an understanding of my own forgiven – ness!

Now here’s where the rubber meets the road. We are then invited into the story of forgiveness. The Kingdom of forgiveness.

There’s a fascinating little word in Jesus prayer that we need to talk about, which should cause every one of us to stop in our tracks. It should send shivers down your spine. It’s a word that is only two little letters, but should change the way you interact with everybody who has ever wronged you, hurt you...

**Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

*“No word in English carries a greater possibility of terror than the little word ‘as’ in that clause.”* (Charles Williams)

The idea here is...

**2. God forgives us in the same way we forgive others.**

Lest you think Jesus slipped up in his wording or that maybe that little word has to do with translations. Jesus, concludes the Lord’s Prayer with a post-script. **P.S.**

We usually end the prayer (For thine is the Kingdom, power, and glory forever Amen) and we don’t quote the post-script.

**14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**

You know in a letter or email, when you get to the end and you want to add one final word, usually one final reminder...you include P.S.

Was reading that people who study the structure of letters/emails, believe that the most important information is often placed in the P.S. (Ortberg) We don't use PS as much in our day of cell phones, we use other forms to express the importance of our messages.

Think about it this way. Let's just say I received a message from Jenny at the office that looks like this: **"Are you coming home soon?"** That's a harmless message. I might take a few mins before I respond. I might respond with, "I'll be home in a bit. I'm finishing up some important Pastor stuff. Writing my sermon. Praying for hours. It may about an hour or two yet."

On the other hand if I get a message that looks like this: **"ARE YOU COMING HOME SOON?????!!!!!!"**

Slightly different emphasis. If you get a message in **ALL CAPS, BOLD, UNDERLINED** and multiple exclamation points, you kind of know...this is the highlight.

Jesus says, PS...if you forgive other people your heavenly father will forgive you. If you don't forgive others, your heavenly father will not forgive you.

Any questions, thanks for coming this morning.

CS Lewis – **There is no slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness on any other terms. It is made perfectly clear that if we do not forgive we shall not be forgiven. There are no two ways about it.** (116)

And I realize that creates a little bit of a tension for us, and we won't be able to resolve that tension. If you don't like it, blame Jesus. He said it. But a little bit of context here can help us with the tension...

What you need to remember is that Jesus sermon is in the context of *"I'm giving you a new rule for doing life. I'm going to tell you what it looks like to live the Kingdom of heaven life, in your world, where people are imperfect and they mess up and they hurt you."* (You have heard said...but I say to you.)

The former rule, the way of dealing with someone else's failure in the kingdom of earth and in your little kingdom is often retaliation, vengeance, anger...(lex talionis) the law of retaliation.

You have heard that it was said, an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." You hurt me. I hurt you. You offend me. I offend you. You kick me. I kick you.

Those are the rules in the Kingdom of this world. The problem is the law of retaliation never actually leads to healed, restored relationships. It only leads to a vicious, unending cycle of retaliation.

Jesus says in His kingdom it's different, different rules. When you accept Christ. When you choose to make him Lord and master, you become his follower...You are saying, *"I now choose to live according to the rules of your Kingdom not the Kingdom of this world."*

I grew playing soccer greatest game on earth. Where I grew up in Zambia, we called soccer, **football** because there's a ball and you use your feet to kick that ball. It's the

rules in the soccer Kingdom. No hands, kick the ball with your feet. It makes sense. I moved to the United States when I was 9 years old. Did you know there's a game here called Football also? But different rules here. New kingdom, new rules, in fact you actually don't use your feet. You use your hands most of the time. But it's called football. It's very confusing. But different kingdom, different rules. If you sign up to play football in the United States, whether you like it or not, you now play with a new set of rules, you're in a different kingdom.

When you choose to follow Jesus, you are entering into his Kingdom and in that kingdom, he's King, and he has these new rules for how you resolve someone else's failure, sin against you. Retaliation is out, forgiveness is in.

*Those who genuinely love others forgive. Those who don't forgive are not kingdom people.* (McKnight)

**Colossians 3:13 – “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”**

In the same way Jesus forgives you, you are expected to forgive others. To all of those who have acted imperfectly towards us...“You don't owe a thing. Your debt is forgiven.”

We've been talking a lot this year about knowing, loving, following Jesus. It's not just that Jesus taught forgiveness in his sermon. It's not just that Jesus told stories of forgiveness (King/servant)...it's not just that Jesus taught his followers to pray about forgiveness...It's that Jesus lived out the ultimate example of forgiveness. **(PIC OF JESUS ON CROSS)**

Some of the most profound words in history, as Jesus hangs on that cross: **“Father forgive them...”** There is no retaliation, no vengeance. Neither Pilate, nor the High Priest nor the centurion, the soldiers, nor the crowds offered an apology to Jesus and

yet he prayed for their forgiveness...in the midst of their brutality towards him.” On the cross Jesus, in total innocence of wrongdoing, acted out the Lord’s prayer.  
(Bailey pg 125)

You don’t owe a thing. Your debt is forgiven. Forgive as Jesus forgave you.

Really important to understand about forgiveness.

### **3. Forgiveness means I will not hold your failure against you.**

It’s doesn’t mean forgetting or overlooking the offense. We’ll get to that in a minute. But it does mean I no longer hold your failure, your sin against you.

- a. I will not choose to continually think about this incident.**
- b. I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.**
- c. I will not talk to others about this incident.**

This is the example Christ lived on the cross. This is the way in which you have been forgiven.

There’s a remarkable story about forgiveness, that some of you are likely familiar with. I share it because I still haven’t found a better example. Are you familiar with this young lady?

#### **(PIC OF CORRIE TEN BOOM)**

This is Corrie Ten Boom. She was a young Jewish girl stuck for years in a German concentration camp, humiliated, degraded, and abused...happened to countless numbers of young Jewish girls by German officers. But she made it through. And eventually she felt she had, by grace, forgiven even those fiends who guarded the shower stalls.

So, she traveled, to countries, churches as a speaker...preaching forgiveness. After her sermons, people would come up and talk to her. One particular Sunday she preached, in Munich, Germany. After her sermon, as she was greeting people, she saw a man coming forward, his hand outstretched: *“It is wonderful that Jesus forgives us all our sins, just as you say.”*

She remembered his face, the lecherous, leering, mocking face one of those German guards over her shower stall.

Her hand was frozen by her side. She could not forgive. She thought she had forgiven. But she could not forgive when she met a guard, standing in the solid flesh in front of her.

This is why forgiveness can be so challenging for us. Forgiveness is in many ways an act of mercy. It is not something the other person deserves. The officer does not deserve forgiveness. The servant before the King, does not deserve forgiveness. Those who sin against you don't deserve your forgiveness. You and me, we do not deserve forgiveness.

Ashamed she prayed to herself: *“Lord, forgive me, I cannot forgive this man.”*

And she says, that as she prayed those words, she felt forgiven by Jesus. She felt accepted, in spite of her shabby performance as a famous forgiver.

Her hand was suddenly unfrozen. The ice of hate melted. Her hand went out. She forgave as she felt forgiven.

(Christianity Today – Lewis Smede)

On the cross, Jesus forgives you for all the ways you are not the person you were intended to be. Forgiveness is his act of mercy and grace towards you.

So to the one who lied to you. To the one who took advantage of you. To the one who failed you...Your debt is forgiven.

Now we need to make two quick clarifications here regarding forgiveness, because sometimes we misunderstand this.

#### **4. Forgiveness does not mean “Never mind.”**

It does not mean we overlook or deny or pretend that nothing happened. Forgiveness does not mean that injustice must be tolerated. It does not mean “staying in abusive situations” or “letting people have their way with you.” (Bailey 126-127)

In forgiveness, there is a recognition that there has actually been wrong done. There are consequences for wrong behavior. And so even in forgiveness, there may need to be boundaries and safe-guards set up.

#### **5. Forgiveness does not always lead to reconciliation.**

Reconciliation is when both sides agree that there has been a wrong committed and are willing to work towards resolution. And that doesn't always happen.

Paul writes to the believers in Rome, **“As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”** You have to hold up your end of the bargain and that often includes forgiveness and an attitude of no longer holding the offense over someone's head. But you cannot control the behaviors, thoughts, choices of others.

Reconciliation can only happen when both parties are interested.

So, I know you're probably thinking to yourself...where can I find a group of flawed, defected sinners....a group of imperfect people who at times say hurtful things or don't always get along so that you can practice forgiveness...well the good news You're here. You found us. It's Five Forks church. Welcome home.

See what we know, what we realize, here at Five Forks is that we won't always get it right. Even when we try our best. So we're not fulling ourselves. We're not a perfect church, we're not perfect people. We are an imperfect church with lots of broken people. And every Sunday, we're getting together, studying the words of Jesus, the Lord's Prayer so that we can learn to forgive as we have been forgiven.