

02.23.22 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “My Heart – Forgiveness Received and Forgiveness Given”

Scripture Reading: [Matthew 6: 9–12](#), [Matthew 18: 21-35](#)

Reflection: Rev. Evan Heerema

The [Spiritual Formation Guide](#) for this week includes the following question: “What would your home, your school, your workplace, your community, your life, and our world look like without forgiveness?” To me, the answer to that question would be total anarchy, people blatantly killing each other, others selling drugs to underage children, human trafficking, lying, sexual freedom outside of marriage, lusting after big payoffs at casinos (and the advertisement of that as normal on television and roadside billboards), and churches in which people don’t talk to each other because of long held feuds. In fact, Pastor Doug mentioned in the Tuesday morning discipleship Zoom meeting, that all the organizations listed in that question would not exist without forgiveness.

I rephrased the question to the Zoom group, “What would your home, your school, your workplace, your community, your life, and our world look like if people practiced forgiveness?” I will let you answer that yourself. But in answering it, are we not then responsible and privileged to bring our answer about by seeking God’s kingdom here on earth and by submitting ourselves to His will?

Based on the Bible, the fact is that since the beginning God desired to have a debt, trespass, and sin-free relationship with his creation. He created heaven on earth, with open access between himself and his creation. No sacrifices were needed to ensure that confession, repentance, and redemption was being made, no curtains hanging between the presence of God and sinful people in the Tabernacle and Temple, no need for a Savior to be born in Bethlehem, no prayers and services of lament and repentance, only gracious love between God and all his very good creation.

But the Bible also very candidly tells us that mankind was not satisfied with that Creator-creature relationship. We acted selfishly against God. “Very good” became, “Ugh – and ugly.” Creation needed a redeemer to satisfy our debt to God, we needed a Savior to redeem us from God’s just punishment, and we needed God’s presence to provide the means for us to live with each other and within the world. Since almost the beginning of history, God provided forgiveness, flowing from his love for us. He redeemed his people, bringing them back from captivity, over and over again, and he still is doing that. Jesus came to be our redeemer, taking the punishment and stripes that we justly deserve (and he did not deserve). We live because God loved us through Jesus. Jesus was loving enough to pray for the forgiveness of those whose sins caused him to be on the cross. Oh, what love has been given to us.

And what a privileged opportunity has been given to those who live in Jesus to show the extent of God’s forgiveness to others. How great is God’s love to you? Love others with the same measure of love. As N.T. Wright writes, “In particular, having received God’s forgiveness themselves (*the disciples of Jesus, eph*), they were to practice it amongst themselves. Not to do so would mean they hadn’t grasped what was going on” (N.T. Wright, [The Lord and His Prayer](#), Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1996).

Have you, as a disciple of Jesus, grasped what is going on between God our Abba Father and yourself, and between Abba and ourselves, we who are his “boots on the ground community?” I trust you have for your sake and for Jesus’ sake and for the sake of God’s kingdom on earth.

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, your name alone is holy. May your kingdom come, and your will be done through us on earth as it is in heaven. Out of your mercy please give us today all that we need to let our schedule be your schedule, to your glory. And, for your Son’s sake, forgive us our trespasses, and equip us with power, wisdom, and love to forgive others, that your grace would be known, and keep us from places and times where evil and the evil one might lurk; give us spiritual eyes to recognize it and run from it and to run to you. We pray this because in our hearts we know that all glory, all honor, all power belongs to you, our Father in heaven. So be it now and forever, Amen.

Action Item for the Day/Week:

During this worship series on prayer, we are going to be experimenting with different prayer practices each week:

Practice #7: Prayer of Examen – Focusing on Forgiveness

This week, engage in the prayer of examen at the end of each day. Reflect on the events of your day, paying special attention to any persons you need to ask forgiveness from and to whom you need to extend forgiveness. Who do you need to ask for forgiveness? Whom do you need to forgive?

Song for today:

[Lord, Speak to Me](#)

[Lord, Speak to Me](#)