

Sermon 2: "Grace: The Power to Forgive"

Title: The Forgiving Nature of Grace

Scripture: **Matthew 6:14-15**

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.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Last week we learned about the nature and role of Grace in The Calling of God. Today, we gather to revisit an important aspect of our faith: the grace of forgiveness. We will draw on important passages from Matthew 6:14-15, Ephesians 1:7, and Colossians 3:13, to garner a more comprehensive understanding of how grace empowers us to forgive. Forgiveness is not merely an act we perform. It's a transformative lifestyle, shaping our spiritual growth and fostering reconciliation. Through forgiveness, we liberate ourselves from bitterness, anger, and resentment moving towards inner peace and joy.

First, we will learn about forgiveness' reciprocal nature. Continuing our discussion, we'll uncover the symbolic cost of our redemption by grace from Ephesians 1:7. And lastly, we will explore the impact of Jesus teachings in Colossians 3:13 for us as His disciples, which emphasizes the importance of imitating God's forgiving nature.

As we take these steps on our sacred pilgrimage to heaven, let us hold fast to the truth that forgiveness is a cornerstone of our faith. In our pursuit of Christian living, it is essential to embody the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the book of Matthew, chapter 6, verses 14 and 15, we are reminded of the profound significance of forgiveness. The scripture reveals that if we refuse to forgive our fellow beings, then we ourselves shall not be granted forgiveness from the Father. This divine truth echoes through the ages, resonating in the depths of our souls.

Yet, my dear congregation, let us not be disheartened by the weight of this commandment. For in our moments of struggle, when we grapple with forgiving those who have inflicted deep wounds upon us, we find solace in the immeasurable grace bestowed upon us by our heavenly Father.

Grace empowers us to forgive others, mend our broken relationships, and ultimately bring joy to our lives. The moment we remove grace from the equation of pardoning we end up with an exponential level of pain and suffering often unbearable for the human soul. After all Jesus already taught us in the Gospels that it is **ONLY** through pardoning that we are forgiven.

Forgiveness has both a horizontal and vertical dimension. The horizontal dimension refers to forgiveness between human beings, while the vertical dimension involves forgiveness from God to humans. It is common for people to focus more on the horizontal dimension, considering the actions of others towards us and what we do to others. Unfortunately, this narrow focus often overlooks the wrongful actions, words, and thoughts we commit against God and the forgiveness offered to us through the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. By acknowledging this vertical dimension of forgiveness, we can develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the forgiveness we receive from God.

In Colossians 3:13 states, ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Let me share two amazing stories with you that highlights the power of forgiveness, featuring two incredible biblical characters. In the Bible, there was a man named Joseph who faced betrayal from his jealous brothers.

They sold him as a slave, causing him unimaginable suffering. But here's where it gets interesting - years later, Joseph forgave them and even saved them from a terrible famine. What a remarkable act of forgiveness! Joseph's story shows us just how transformative forgiveness can be, bringing reconciliation and redemption.

Now, let me tell you about another impactful character from the Bible named Peter. So, get this. Peter denied knowing Jesus, not just once, but three times! Can you imagine the guilt and remorse he must have felt? But the incredible part is that Jesus forgave him. The depth of that forgiveness completely transformed Peter's life, giving him hope, purpose, and the strength to share the message of love and forgiveness with others. These stories serve as a poignant reminder of the profound healing and transformative abilities of forgiveness. They inspire us to fully embrace forgiveness, allowing it to become our guiding force on our own personal journeys, much like Joseph and Peter demonstrated.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to accept the forgiving nature of grace and spread it to those around us. We must strive to forgive even the most unforgivable actions of others just as God has forgiven us. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."

In the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 32, we read: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you." This verse illustrates the importance of forgiveness in our lives. God, through his grace, has forgiven us, and we, as his children, are called to forgive others.

Forgiveness through grace is not an easy task. It requires us to let go of our pride, anger, and resentment toward others. However, it is essential for us to follow the lead of Jesus on living a life filled with love and reconciliation. In his book, *The Art of Forgiving*,

Lewis B. Smedes writes, "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."

Grace not only empowers us to forgive but also mends broken relationships. With grace, we can rebuild what was lost, make amends, and work toward unity. Ephesians 1:7 states: In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. Similarly, in his book, *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande writes, "Forgiveness is not forgetting or excusing the wrongs done to us. It is the process of letting go of the wrong and allowing God to heal our hearts."

Grace frees us to forgive others by giving us the strength to let go of our resentment and anger toward those who have hurt us. It is through grace that we can forgive even the most hurtful actions of others, as God has forgiven us. Grace helps us to mend our broken relationships and allows us to rebuild what was lost. It guides us in our spiritual journey toward forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity.

Forgiveness plays a significant role in our spiritual growth as passionate spiritual disciples. Forgiveness liberates us from feelings of anger, bitterness, and resentment, enabling personal healing and spiritual development. It allows us to resemble God's own forgiving nature, as we are called to forgive others just as God forgives us.

On the other hand, by offering forgiveness to others, we actively contribute to the restoration of harmony and the healing of fractured relationships. This profound act promotes unity and a sense of tranquility, resulting into a more peaceful and united community. In addition, forgiveness serves as a powerful catalyst for spiritual growth as it allows us to align ourselves more closely with the core principles of the Christian faith.

Furthermore, this practice of forgiveness positively impacts our interpersonal connections, enhancing the quality and depth of our relationships. Those who call themselves disciples of Christ release the burden of resentment and grudges, by creating space for love, understanding, and empathy to flourish as Children of the Living God. Fundamentally, embracing forgiveness not only brings about an inner sense of serenity and contentment, but also fosters an enduring joy that emanates from our transformed hearts.

Forgiveness is not just a commandment but a joyful way of life. When we forgive, we free ourselves from bitterness, anger, and resentment, leading to peace and joy in our lives. In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verses 14-15, we read, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

How can we apply the concept of grace and forgiveness in our daily lives? Let's now explore several Practical Ways to practice forgiveness and promote reconciliation among one another.

Application of Grace and Forgiveness:

1. Practicing Forgiveness: Forgiving someone who has wronged us can be a challenging but crucial action. It involves releasing resentments and anger, which promotes inner peace and harmony.
2. Promoting Reconciliation: Grace and forgiveness help mend damaged relationships. Actively seeking to reconcile with those people in your life you've had disagreements or hurts which can help apply these principles. How is our relationship with our spouses, sons, daughters, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and coworkers?
3. Emulating God's Forgiveness: Just as God forgives our trespasses, we can make it a point to forgive others, regardless of the perceived intensity of their wrongs. Who do we need to forgive this week?
4. Practicing Kindness: Show compassion and kindness to everyone around you, even those you struggle with. This is a tangible expression of grace.
5. Self-Forgiveness: At times, you may need to forgive yourself for past mistakes. Recognizing our own need for grace can help us extend it to others. **Key Principle: God loves us despite of our imperfections. He knows we are human, and incapable of not making mistakes or sinning. Therefore, God seeks NOT the perfection of our actions but rather the perfection of our intentions. If we are able to Master this principle, we will be free and free in deed to forgive ourselves and others.**
6. Sharing Grace: As recipients of God's grace, we are encouraged to extend this grace to others. This can translate into acts of kindness, understanding, and love toward others.

In conclusion, Grace empowers us to forgive others, heal broken relationships, and bring joy to our lives. Therefore, it is conclusive that Without grace is impossible to forgive and experience forgiveness.

Let us embrace grace's forgiving nature and share it with those around us. As Jesus taught us in his sermon on Mathew 5.

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil
against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in
heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Let us pray.

Merciful God, we are grateful for the gift of grace that empowers us to forgive. Please help us forgive those who have hurt us and restore our broken relationships. May your grace continue to guide us on our journey towards forgiveness and reconciliation. Amen

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive and be forgiving be with you always.

Thank you!