

## *“Three Pennies and a Rock – Forgiveness”*

*Psalm 20; Matthew 18:1-4*

November 14, 2021

### Forgiveness

- The central topic of the entire Bible is Jesus Christ.
  - o That’s why we’re Christians.
  - o Our denomination is progressing down a very unbiblical line and I don’t mean about theology or morals or ethics.
    - Those are largely errors in applied understanding of the Bible.
      - The Central issue is the particularity of salvation through Jesus Christ.
        - o **Acts 4:12** – *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*
- But, you see, in the contemporary world, such exclusiveness runs afoul of our highly-educated sensibilities.
  - o So, Jesus is muted. As in the Christian nature of our denomination is actually waning.
    - Return to Presbytery of Charlotte weekly news blast
      - Reg King, Cheryl and I...
      - Rev. Joan at Panera Bread, lectionary group
        - o **John 14:6** – *“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*
    - But it’s not just us.
      - Other denominations have forged ahead.
        - o And they all do so under the belief that, by not embracing other faiths as co-equal, they’re somehow going to turn into these mean, evil people that somehow just HATE everyone and everything.
          - Oh, friends, the IRONY of that,
            - Because when you mute Jesus, what you’re actually turning down the volume on is FORGIVENESS
  - I hear so many people lament the “political divide” or how polarized we are in America right now.
    - o I get it.
      - Divisiveness
      - But what is the key driver of divisiveness
        - Lack of forgiveness
          - o The capacity to “Agree to disagree” is a direct reflection of our ability to forgive.

### Recap Sermon Series

- 3 Pennies and a Rock
  - o **Matthew 18:1-4** – *“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*
- Ben Story about Bronx Cheer
  - o Little buddy Graham, I think maybe.
  - o Tussled
  - o Next day, bumpos – laughing and giggling
    - They’d forgotten the day before, long before I had.
  - o Maybe it’s that, when you’re little and small, staying mad at someone isn’t in your best interests.

- HUMILITY is what makes us consider ourselves little and small.
- **Philippians 2:1-5** – *“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”*

#### The Centrality of Jesus Christ is the Gospel

- When we lose that distinctiveness, we lose our impetus to forgive others
  - Why? Just listen to what JESUS SAYS (only Jesus, no one else)
    - **Matthew 6:14-15** – *“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.”*
    - **Luke 17:3-4** – *“Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”*
    - **Mark 11:25** – *“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”*
    - **Luke 6:37** – *“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;”*
    - **Matthew 18:21-22** – *“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”*
    - **Luke 23:34** – *“And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’” And they cast lots to divide his garments.”*
      - As he is crucified, as the Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross  
GAMBLE over his belongings (how callous is that, by the way?” Jesus is forgiving!
  - Don’t miss this one from the Sermon on the Mount
    - **Matthew 5:43-48** – *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*
      - Did you get that?
      - Jesus says, YOU CAN DO FORGIVENES
        - Don’t focus on the being perfect, focus on the presence of God to make ALL THINGS all possible
          - EVEN FORGIVENESS
- How many of y’all?
  - Potato story
    - Ugly, squishy, smelly
  - Jesus – Obedience to His WORD
    - **Colossians 3:13** – *“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*

- So, how many of y'all got some resentments towards other people that you haven't forgiven yet, in your heart, not truly?
- How many of y'all got some people close to you that you haven't forgiven yet for something done?

#### The Role of Marriage

- Do a sermon series on this – I may
- Tim Keller
  - Space where we can work of our forgiveness with someone really, really close that you've made promises to in FRONT OF GOD
- Call marriage the greatest incentive to learn about forgiveness in the history of mankind.
  - Especially if you're married to THIS GUY!
- The way we are able to forgive our spouses is supposed to be a model for how we treat the world.
  - **Ephesians 5:25** – *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”*

#### Lack of Forgiveness is a LACK OF OBEDIENCE

- Ah, there's a word none of us like very much.
  - In fact, as a natural-born rebel, this is the area of my greatest struggle
    - **ESPECIALLY WHEN I THINK I KNOW BETTER!**
      - Ever notice how that's a dangerous place?
        - Well, as a Christian, I may THINK I know better than God at times, but when I remember Jesus, I remember just how wrong I AM.

#### The World and Forgiveness

- Oprah Winfrey
  - Forgiveness is first and foremostly a blessing to YOU
    - Ever noticed how everything in this world is becoming a function of YOU?
      - Starbucks STORY
        - You're easily manipulated by the people you think really “GET” you
    - The byproduct of forgiveness is that you do, in fact, feel better not carrying around those squishy, stinky potatoes
    - And it is, **but that's not it's primary function.** In fact, if you put that piece up front, you'll never get very far with forgiveness
      - Because forgiveness ISN'T ABOUT YOU! IT'S about the POWER OF GOD WORKING IN YOU
        - It's EVANGELICAL!!!!
          - People are supposed to stop and think, HEY, that guy or gal seems pretty free of resentment and bitterness
            - I'd like to be free of bitterness and resentment
              - Maybe I'll figure out what so-and-so is doing
- Now imagine if Church folks are the most bicker some, least forgiving folks around?
  - How appealing is that?
    - And we wonder about our empty pews?!?!?!?

No, this matter of forgiveness of others is an essential piece of our Christian walk because it ties us directly back to Jesus ON AND ONGOING BASIS

- What surer way could God have come up with to continually be returning our thoughts to him than by linking forgiveness to Him in a world filled with BROKEN SINNERS
  - This world will bump you around and a big, big part of that is how other people treat you.
    - If you're not living in a cabin in remote, Northern Idaho (my dream, believe it or not) you're going to have, let's call them, “issues with other people.”
- REPEAT THE GOSPEL!!!!

## Loop BACK TO JESUS

- It's all about Jesus Christ
- To mute Him at all, even one iota, it's wrong and it does have effects
- Because He forgave us, we forgive others
- And it's time we got rid of those squishy, stinking potatoes we're carrying around, got us some Jesus, and got to changing this world.