

**Osceola Sermon Live Like Your Dying:
"Seek Forgiveness"
November 13th, 2011 (Pastor Bob Vale)**

Biblical Focus: Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 6:9-15 ""This, then, is how you should pray:" `Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ^{MT 6:10} your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ^{MT 6:11} Give us today our daily bread. ^{MT 6:12} Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ^{MT 6:13} And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ' ^{MT 6:14} For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

8:30 a.m.traditional service:

Opening Hymn: # 140 Great is Thy Faithfulness

The Apostles Creed #881

Response # 70 "Glory Be To The Father."

Prayer Chorus: # 143 On Eagles Wings

Hymn of Response: #348 Softly and Tenderly Jesus is calling

Offertory for both services: show this internet video clip:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3D4VMZb8wLY&feature=related>

Solid Praise Service:

1. Shine Jesus Shine (Graham Kendrick)
2. Better is One Day (Matt Redmond)
- Scripture Reading: I Kings 19:11-13
3. The Voice of God (Mark Manuel)
4. I Will Rise (Chris Tomlin)

Following the Scripture Reading show the Video Clip: **Forgive as the Lord Forgave you.** (Sermonspice.com: Forgiveness Fisheye Productions) I've already downloaded it & put on the tech team folder.

Hearing the sweet words, "**I forgive you**" has a tremendous healing power in our lives. Being forgiven or forgiving someone is a felling of wholeness and completeness.

It is sometimes easy to accidently offend others, or to be offended by the things people say and do to us.

Are there people that you need to forgive or perhaps seek forgiveness from today?

May the Lord speak to you, as we learn together the truth of forgiveness!

In our scripture lesson today, Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray. In the previous verses he is asking them not to pray like the Pharisees who are hypocrites as they stand in the streets and shout out their prayers to be seen by the world.

Part of the prayer Jesus is asking us to pray has the words, ^{MT 6:12} "**Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**"

Why does God ask us to forgive others?

What would it be like to live in a world where people chose not to forgive? In other words:

1. Grudges never ended.
2. The sweet words "I'm Sorry, Please Forgive Me and You're Forgiven were never uttered."
3. What if people never spoke to each other because of a hurt from their past?

There are three things I want us to learn today about Godly forgiveness:

1. Forgiveness can be difficult.
2. Forgiveness is not optional.

3. Forgiveness brings healing & freedom.

1. Forgiveness can be Difficult:

It was Elizabeth O'Connor who said, "Forgiveness is a whole lot harder than any sermon makes it out to be."

In his book, *Letters to Malcolm*, C.S. Lewis writes these words, "Last week in prayer, I discovered, or at least I think I did, that I suddenly was able to forgive someone that I had been trying to forgive for over thirty years."

If you have lived long enough on this earth and had relationships with people; you realize forgiveness can sometimes be extremely difficult: (Both to give out and receive.)

I love to watch children play together; especially elementary children. There are times when they too can get cross with each other. One won't share a toy with the other; another child says something mean to the other; I've even seen children hit, bite and fight with each other in the play ground.

Many of us look at these behaviors of children and say, awe, their just children; that is what kids do. For the most part you are right. The miracle to the way children play is that one day they will be mean to their friend, not share a toy or even fighting and the next day they are the best of friends.

Why is that?

Why can't adults have more of that child like forgiving nature?

As adults, if someone crosses us in traffic we want the tires to fall off of their vehicle. If someone hurts us through gossip or mean language we detest them and pray one of the plagues of Egypt upon them. God forbid if another person should speak out against us in public; we may never speak to them again.

I John 4:7-8 "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Now you know why the Bible says the scriptures can cut to the bone and marrow and correct out attitudes.

Illustration: Several years ago after an elderly woman passed away. Her family members were cleaning out her house when they found a scrapbook filled with obituaries from the local newspaper. Many of the death notices pertained to people she had detested throughout her life. As bizarre as it may sound, she kept a scrapbook of her dead enemies.

This woman had five different clippings of her most despised foe in her morbid memory book. Apparently she had gained some kind of strange satisfaction by thinking they could no longer torment her.

Or could they? If we don't forgive our deceased enemies, they'll continue to haunt us through our hateful memories of them.

Why is it that some people cannot let go of these things?

Micah 6:8 "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Love Mercy More Than Justice: "Forgiveness means you love mercy more than justice." (Micah 6:8)

This means you offer mercy even to the offender, rather than waiting for them to respond first with mercy to you.

Natives in Africa capture monkeys by setting up cages and placing bait inside. The bait can be anything a monkey would want, such as food or an unusual shiny object. The monkeys are lured to the cages but are too smart to actually go inside the cage.

Instead, they reach through the bars, grab the bait, and try to pull it out. Because the object is too large to go through the bars, the only way the monkey can get away is to drop the bait. But monkeys refuse to let go. They kick and squeal but keep holding on. They stay trapped in bondage because they refuse to let go of the bait.

What are you holding on to that you are not willing to let go?

(Have within my hand a few folded pieces of paper and pretend that I am stuck and not able to get away from the bars; “what is it that I am holding on to that I will not let go?”

Take the pieces of paper out and unfold them and see what they say. (Pride, I hurt too deeply to forgive and forget, I enjoy hanging this over their head, I don’t know how to forgive, I rather enjoy the consistency of hate, The Hell with them.)

(Are you holding any of these excuses that God cannot take away?)

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

2. Forgiveness is not optional:

In our scripture lesson today: ^{MT 6:14} For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

As a Christian, forgiving others is not just a suggestion; it is a command of the Lord. It is just as demanding as any of the 10 commandments.

Sitting on a Bumble Bee

Unforgiveness means we desire to hurt the people who have wounded us. It's like the little boy who was sitting on a park bench in obvious agony. A man walking by asked him what was wrong. The boy answered, "I'm sitting on a bumble bee." "Then why don't you get up?" the man asked. The boy replied, "Because I figure that I am hurting him more than he is hurting me!"

The healing process begins when we get up off the park bench. God will only heal our wounds when we stop inflicting pain on the one who hurt us.

One thing I have learned in this life: “You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.”

"When I have difficulty forgiving someone: Here is how I feel:

1. I lose the peace that passes all understanding in my life.
2. I feel guilt and sadness in my conscious. (the Holy Spirit is asking me to soften my heart and express forgiveness.)
3. I feel irritated and depressed.
4. Physically, I just don't feel right.
6. At time I may even get a headache.

It is as if the person I struggle to forgive is actually holding me hostage.

3. Forgiveness brings healing & Freedom:

In his short story “The Capitol of the World,” Ernest Hemingway tells the story of a Spanish father and his teenage son. The relationship between this father and son became strained and eventually shattered. When the

rebellious son—whose name was Paco, a common Spanish name—ran away from home, his father began a long and arduous search to find him. As a last resort, the exhausted father placed an ad in a Madrid newspaper, hoping that his son would see the ad and respond to it. The ad read, Dear Paco, Please meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven.
Love, Father

As Hemingway tells the story, the next day at noon, in front of the newspaper office, there were 800 Paco's, all seeking forgiveness from their fathers.

Are you like one of those Paco's? Carrying around a load of guilt, wanting forgiveness, but not knowing where to find it? Your Father in heaven, who loves you very much, has made the first move. Just as Paco's father ran an ad in the paper, so God sent his son to die on a Roman cross.

I John 1:9 Says the following: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

All of these 800 Paco's were seeking healing & freedom from a broken relationship with their father.

How about you today; are you seeking healing & freedom?

Closing Illustration / Drama: An African Tale: I have asked **Barb Stith** to perform this drama at the close of the sermon. It is very moving: (4 minutes)

Each of us has a choice. God calls us to show mercy; the devil say's hold on to the hate.

I've seen the hardest heart melt in the presence of the Lord; all that is required is permission to allow the Holy Spirit to move in your life in this area.

Let's Pray,

Laura Coffel: I would like to set up the candles in the front of the church again for a special altar call. I am asking folks to come forward and light a candle if they are hurting in this area; then to pray at the altar.

1. If they are seeking forgiveness from someone.
2. If they would like strength to forgive someone.
3. If they know of a situation where there is strife among friends, family or co-workers that you would like to pray about.

Jeff Marshall; I would like for you to play the piano softly during this for both services. (Play and softly sing: Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling: # 348 (While you are playing ask **Laurie Coffel** to replay the offertory video about forgiveness but without sound.)

Seek Forgiveness Sermon Notes: Pastor Bob Vale

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 6:9-15 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ^{MT 6:10} your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ^{MT 6:11} Give us today our daily bread. ^{MT 6:12} Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ^{MT 6:13} And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. " ^{MT 6:14} For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

1. Forgiveness can be difficult.

- a. I John 4:7-8 "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

2. Forgiveness is not optional.

- a. Matthew 6:14 ^{MT 6:14} For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

3. Forgiveness brings healing & freedom.

- a. **I John 1:9 Says the following:** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."