

## Forgiveness

Scripture: Psalm 32:1 – 5, Jeremiah 23:1 – 6, & Luke 23:33 – 43

In our first scripture reading from the Book of Psalms, it is believed to have been composed by King David after his sexual sin. David compounded his wrongdoing by devising a sinister plan that resulted in the death of the woman's husband that David was involved with.

While these ugly incidents were behind David, the effects of his actions remained. In Psalm 32:3 – 4, David describes the deep struggles he experienced before he acknowledges the ugliness of his deeds. David has the gnawing effects of unconfessed sin that are undeniably hurting him.

What brought relief? Relief began with confession to God and accepting the forgiveness that God offers!

What a great place for us to start! What a great place – to confess our sins to God and accept the forgiveness God offers! We need to start our search for forgiveness at the place of God's mercy. When we do or say things that cause hurt and harm to ourselves and others, we need to seek the forgiveness God offers!

The guilt of our sins need not be permanent. There is One whose arms are open wide to receive us when we acknowledge our wrongs and seek God's forgiveness. We can join the chorus of those who sing – *Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*'

In our second scripture reading, Jeremiah speaks of the Babylonian exile and the eventual restoration of the remnant of Judah. Jeremiah talks about the sins of the past kings of Judah and how these sins brought about the downfall of Judah. These leaders of Judah; these shepherds of Judah have failed to care for God's sheep; the people of Judah. But yet, even in these difficult times, God is moved to act and God gathers the remaining scattered sheep and raises up a wise and righteous shepherd so that the sheep will no longer be afraid.

The perils of poor leadership are all too familiar to us living in this time in our country and world! When a company goes bankrupt, the CEO is often fired but the CEO is given a huge severance check. When an organization fails, others suffer in the loss of jobs while those leading the organization gain financially. When companies are unable to make good on corporative promises, people are put out of work while those leading the company seem safe from any loss!

Jeremiah warns that the consequences for Judah will be horrific! However, God is not content to stand aside and watch unfaithful kings lead Judah away from faithful living and right relationships. This is good news!

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For Jeremiah and for us, our new leader who will reign with wisdom and justice is Jesus Christ!

It is all of our wishes and prayers that our new leaders elected recently will reign with wisdom, justice, unity, and empathy for all people!

In Luke's Gospel we see that Jesus' ability to forgive is astounding! Jesus forgives those who crucified him. Jesus forgives those who mock him in the midst of his suffering. Jesus extends mercy to the thief hanging alongside him. Jesus' practice of forgiveness here builds on a ministry of forgiveness throughout Luke's Gospel. As an embodiment of the kingdom of God, Jesus shows us that forgiveness is a sign of God's reign.

We also need to see that our ability to forgive can be astounding. Having just come through the most divisive election ever, we need to see ourselves as the embodiment of the kingdom of God and we need to show that forgiveness is a sign of God's reign. Let us become a forgiving people and let unity be our polar star!

In the New Testament, the language of forgiveness has deep roots. These roots of forgiveness carry with them – release or lousing of old baggage we carry from the past. Forgiveness releases both the one who has been wronged and the one who acted wrongly from a cycle of pain and bondage that can eat away at life. Without forgiveness, people are robbed of joy and peace.

The language of forgiveness needs to have deep roots within each of us. These roots of forgiveness carry with them – release or lousing of old baggage you carry from the past. Without forgiveness, you are robbed of joy and peace.

With our present climate and the unrest within our country, our nation needs the language of forgiveness. The roots of forgiveness carry with them – release or lousing of old baggage we carry from the past. Without forgiveness, our nation will be robbed of joy and peace.

With social media bullies nurturing a culture focused on retaliation and getting even. The language of forgiveness is needed. Forgiveness carries with it – the releasing or lousing of old baggage we carry from the past. Without forgiveness, people are robbed of joy and peace.

Viewing forgiveness as a sign of God’s kingdom should encourage us to live our lives as a witness to the forgive power found in Jesus Christ. The power of Christ makes forgiveness possible!

Let us pray:

O God, forgive us for the times when temptation has won in our lives. Help us always to run to You for forgiveness and to seek the forgiveness of others when needed.

Merciful Christ, your reign is marked by self-giving love and new life. You extended forgiveness even while suffering on the cross. We call ourselves ‘Disciples of Christ’ but too often we harbor resentment and seek revenge against those who have wronged us. Grant us wisdom to recognize the limits of our judgement. May your Holy Spirit empower us to forgive others in your name. Rule over our hearts and lives until your kingdom comes on earth. AMEN.

### **Benediction**

Christ the King has rescued us from the reign of darkness and Christ has brought us into his kingdom! May our lives reflect the light of Christ in our work, our schools, our homes, and our neighborhoods. As we move from this worship service into the world, let us serve Christ with joy and thanksgiving.

