



Forgive Them...

March 30 & 31 // Jim Johnson

God forgives _____ and we _____ need forgiveness.

Luke 23:26-38

TIME WITH GOD: If you don't currently have a Bible reading plan, you can download "Our Time with God" at spcc.tv/resources

REFLECTIONS: Whether you're using SPCC's reading plan or a different one, think about your time hearing and responding to Jesus this week. In your conversations with Him, describe one thing you felt Him speaking to you about.

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTION: Is there something God spoke to you about through this weekend's message? What stood out to you?

We are accustomed to finding a catch in every promise, but Jesus' stories of extravagant grace include no catch, no loophole disqualifying us from God's love. How different these stories are from my childhood notions about God: a God who forgives, yes, but reluctantly, after making the penitent squirm. Jesus tells instead of a father publicly humiliating himself by rushing out to embrace a son who has squandered half the family fortune. There is no solemn lecture, "I hope you've learned your lesson!" Instead, Jesus tells of the father's exhilaration—"This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found!" What blocks forgiveness is not God's reticence—"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him" —but ours. God's arms are always extended; we are the ones who turn away.—Philip Yancey, What's So Amazing About Grace?

MY PERSPECTIVE: Can you recall a time growing up when you were forgiven for something you did wrong? Describe.

DIGGING DEEPER:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn. 1:9)

Read the following verses: Luke 18:13-14; Luke 23:39-43; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10. Describe the role of confession and repentance in our salvation. Will God forgive unconfessed sins? Why or why not?

Read Matthew 6:14-15; Luke 6:35-36; & Ephesians 4:32. Does God ask us to forgive people who hurt us, even if they aren't repentant? Explain.



The gospel is not at all what we would come up with on our own. I for one, would expect to honor the virtuous over the depraved. I would expect to have to clean up my act before even applying for an audience with a Holy God. But Jesus told of God ignoring a fancy religious teacher and turning instead to an ordinary sinner who pleads, "God, have mercy." Throughout the Bible, in fact, God shows a marked preference for "real" people over "good" people. In Jesus' own words, "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." In one of his last acts before death, Jesus forgave a thief dangling on a cross. That thief would never study the Bible, never attend synagogue or church, and never make amends to all those he had wronged. He simply said "Jesus, remember me," and Jesus promised, "Today you will be with me in paradise." It was another shocking reminder that grace does not depend on what we have done for God but rather what God has done for us. Ask people what they must do to get to heaven and most reply, "Be good." Jesus stories contradict that answer. All we must do is cry, "Help!" God welcomes home anyone who calls on Him, and, in fact, has made the first move already. Jesus came for the sick and not the well, for the unrighteous and not the righteous. To his banquet table he welcomed tax collectors and reprobates and whores. And to those who betrayed him—especially the disciples, who forsook him at his time of greatest need—he responded like a lovesick father.—Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*

MY RESPONSE:

Being forgiven absolutely means more than a clean slate. It means we're loved absolutely, and accepted absolutely, and approved absolutely by our Heavenly Father.

Read Colossians 2:13-14. Do you struggle feeling absolutely accepted and approved by the Father? If so, how does this affect your relationship with Him and others?

Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Luke 6:28)

Read Matthew 5:43-45. Is there someone you need to forgive? Is there someone you find difficult to pray for? Who?

