

Series: Hallowed be your name

Week Commencing 7 November 2022

Reading notes for next week's sermon on "Forgive us our sins..."

Some of our reading notes this week, actually come from the sermon Bishop Mark will share next weekend. We trust this double-up will only be an encouragement and help to ponder these truths more deeply.

DAY 1: Read Psalm 32:1-5

This Psalm shows the sheer relief of finding forgiveness. Look first at what David reports in v3 when he FAILED to confess his sin. The result was that he found himself groaning all day long, and because the Lord's hand was upon him, his strength was sapped – as we feel exhausted after a long hot summer's day. However once he decided to acknowledge his sin, and to no longer pretend it didn't exist, he reports that God forgave the guilt of his sin.

Return now to the opening verses – as here he reports the joy of forgiveness. The one whose transgressions are forgiven, and sin covered (these phrases mean the same thing), is described as 'blessed'. When sin is confessed and forgiven, the Lord does not count people's sin against them. They can be described as having no deceit because they've been open about their sin. (See 1 John 1:8-9) So it is that David comes at the end of the Psalm to exhort us to 'Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!'

Have you confessed your sin and sought God's forgiveness? What relief! What joy! For God has forgiven the guilt of your sin, your sin is covered, and the Lord does not count your sin against you! How much more do we now understand this reality because we live *this* side of Jesus and understand that it is through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, that these truths find their reality. (See 2 Corinthians 5:27-21.)

DAY 2: Read Mark 2:1-12

I'm sure this amazing account is very familiar to you. Yet there are important things to see here again.

The paraplegic is let down on a stretcher by his mates through a hole in the roof – right to the feet of Jesus. They went to all that trouble in the great hope that Jesus would heal the man and that he would get up and walk back up the street! But when confronted with the man and his tragic circumstance, Jesus didn't say anything about the man's *physical* state but his *spiritual* state. *Son, your sins are forgiven.* The implication? The man's sins were more important than his legs!

Being out of relationship with God because of his sin, mattered *way* more than his being unable to walk. Now in this case, to demonstrate he *had* authority to forgive sin, Jesus went on to address that secondary need, but understand this: if today you're unforgiven – because you've never in reality sought forgiveness, than that is THE most pressing issue in your life today! Not your finances, not your family, not rising interest rates, not loss of crops because of the wet. If you're unforgiven, that's the most significant issue in your life right now, because you don't want to lose your life tonight and stand before God unforgiven!

Forgive us our sins... Jesus recommends we pray, because just as we are dependent on our Father's provision for daily bread, so are we daily dependent on him for forgiveness.

Yes, there will be that FIRST time repentance – where we change sides and climb on board with the King. Yet there remains daily failures to obey; daily things we do which we shouldn't; daily things we ought to have done which we don't.

So in the Lord's prayer, Jesus models prayer for forgiveness. It is a daily reminder of our failure and rebellion, but also a beautiful daily reminder our Father's heart to forgive – all because of the Lord Jesus and his death and resurrection.

DAY 3: Read 1 John 1:1-2

How is that our Father can forgive our sin? Some people like to think that God is somehow a benevolent grandfather who simply looks at the circumstances and says, "You know, don't worry about that. I can excuse everything." He can't, because his character is such that justice must be served. God does not overlook sin. Well then, what does he do?

The answer is, he provides *propitiation* for our sin. Many of you will have grown up with the old BCP communion service, and every communion – after the assurance of forgiveness - your minister read what was known as the ‘comfortable words’; Bible verses **full of comfort**. One of those verses – read:

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins. From 1 John 2:1

Propitiation. The more modern versions say: He is “*the atoning sacrifice for our sins.*” God’s holy anger against sin, falls upon his Son, Jesus. The fact is, we deserve God’s wrath on account of sin. But God’s wrath – appropriate anger – is turned away from us because it has fallen on Jesus!

But it is not as if God’s judgement was just handed out on some sort of innocent bystander. Back in 2 Corinthians 5 we read that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us. God himself met the cost, so it could be removed from us. Propitiation – all of the wrath that I deserve, all of the hell that I have to pay, for all of the royal mess that I have made – taken away by Jesus. Jesus hits the delete key, and it never comes back up on the screen.

In today’s communion services, the minister reads (speaking of Jesus):

*By his death on the cross and rising to new life,
he offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.*

Praise God, for the propitiation of sin through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord!

DAY 4: Read Matthew 18:21-35

What do we make of the second part of this phrase: “Forgive us our sins, **as we forgive those who sin against us?**” It is almost as if we are saying to God – we are a good example to you. As *we* forgive others their sins, so you should forgive us *our* sins!

This parable from Matthew 18 may help. A servant owes a King a huge debt. Hard to imagine how he would have come to owe this amount or how he could ever repay it! Jesus is going over the top to make the point. The point is, that the slave can do nothing about his own plight, but miraculously and inexplicably the King does something about it. He forgives the whole debt.

Surely, we think, the slave would have been absolutely overcome with surprise and gratitude and joy. But no. We’re left shocked and speechless, because he meets someone who owes him hardly anything and seizes him by the throat demanding he pay this paltry sum back. It’s unthinkable!

And that twist is the point. Generous forgiveness – if grasped, understood, appreciated, and embraced, *will* result in generous forgiveness.

Forgiveness never means what happened is OK. Forgiveness never means justice no longer needs to be served. Forgiveness never means that an abused person should return for more abuse! Abusive behaviour ought never be permitted to go unchecked! But - if God has forgiven you (through Jesus’ death and resurrection), if you really *get* that, if you’ve woken up to God’s embrace in Christ, if you have a sense of being loved and accepted at the most fundamental level of your being; then when that reality bites, you can’t stop that overflowing to others. Knowing you are loved and forgiven usually ignites a power within us to do the same to others.

Do you think it is possible to forgive when there has been no repentance? That is hard, isn’t it? I do think it’s possible. The Roman soldiers had not repented when Jesus proclaimed, “Father forgive them.”. And wasn’t it while we were still sinners, that Christ died for? That drunken, drug-fuelled driver who mowed down children a couple of years back in Sydney, had not repented before their parents proclaimed forgiveness and instituted ‘I forgive you’ day. When you grasp how serious a debt YOU have had cancelled, I believe it is possible for you to forgive a lesser debt. It doesn’t excuse what has been done to you or condone it. It doesn’t give them permission to continue what they were doing. But it will free YOU. It will liberate you from the hold they have over you. It will free you from their power.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. What we are really saying is, “Oh Lord... may forgiveness be what I receive; and what I live! As you forgive, may I forgive” Not that *our* forgiveness might be a pattern for *him*, but that *his* forgiveness, may be a pattern for *us*!

What does Ephesians 4:32 say? *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

If reading this has been difficult due to past abuse from a church worker, you are urged to call our helpline on 1800 070 511.