

Kingdom Life: Forgiveness 101

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Kingdom Litany based on Psalm 145

Leader: All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,

All: and all your saints shall bless you!

Leader: They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom

All: and tell of your power,

Leader: to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,

All: and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Leader: Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,

All: and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Leader: We worship you, Lord, In the name of the Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 ³¹“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Matthew 18:1-20 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the **kingdom** of heaven?” ²And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

¹⁰“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he

not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

¹⁵“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again I say to you, if two of you agree on **earth** about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in **heaven**. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Let me start by asking you a question. When have you felt most forgiven?

Perhaps a spouse or past romantic relationship. Someone you were vulnerable with hurt your feelings, and you had to do the hard work of talking about what happened.

Maybe a best friend growing up... I mean how many tv shows and movies revolve around the redemption of a relationship that has fallen apart.

You have to learn how to be in a relationship as you grow up, and ironically those most concerned about being loved aren't very good at it. Teenagers are good at gossip and can be real idiots.

I have done it... I hurt friends and potential girl friends in ways I have learned to avoid as an adult.

I have yelled through a bedroom door ruining any chance of a young girl's parents and sibling to trust me. Making a complete fool of myself.

I did things out of ignorance without thinking of the consequences. A less self-revealing example from my high school years.

I learned a complement can go a long way. If a girl has beautiful eyes, then you should tell her. Just maybe not use the same 'line' again and again. There were a couple of girls I worked with at Happy Joes pizza had blue eyes. I mean crystal blue eyes, a lot like my wife has. And I saw the effect it had on a coworker when, once observing the crystal blue – piercing and striking nature of her eyes ... when I told her how striking they were it lifted her spirits. I honestly did not see it as flirting. I saw the effect it had. And, you know, crystal blue eyes *are* very striking ... and there are a lot of girls of Dutch heritage in Pella, Iowa with that same color of eyes. So, I used the same line, a couple of times... I honestly didn't think it was a line. Long story short, two of them confronted me. And I learned from the experience. Not a time in my life when I felt most forgiven... but I benefited from my friends naming what I was doing. Not the worst of sins, but something that was affecting the ability of people... OK girls... to trust me. And there was some healing in those relationships. One of whom was a good friend's girlfriend and a teammate at work. That conversation and forgiveness had real world consequences.

Funny thing is that we never really grow out of making mistakes, the little ones or the big ones. Forgiveness matters. Molly's parents Larry and Marcia, took Molly and I out for dinner at Denny's in Minneapolis, MN during our first year of marriage. As Larry, was paying the bill at the check-out counter... he could not help himself. He complemented the color of our young waitress's eyes.

As the four of us were walking to the car I asked the question to Molly, but so that Larry could hear. 'I just want to know how long we have to be married before I can compliment the waitress's eyes.' Without missing a beat, Marica said. 'Longer than Larry and I.'

Forgiveness. Relationship really... When have you felt most forgiven in life. When have you really experienced the healing and connection that can come from naming a hurt and then receiving forgiveness.

Husbands and wives learn to do this over the years. Best friends learn to do this between each other and for each other. There can be just as much healing from a group of veterans forgivers over tea as can happen in worship. Wives and mothers versed in the pains of life listening to each other's frustrations and releasing (loosing) each other from the shame and guilt and its claims to define us.

Maybe for you it was a parent or grandparent who you thought you let down... only to find they had been routing for you the whole time. In their wisdom and experience in the world they knew the sin and were just waiting for the right time to name it and forgive it.

Maybe for you it was counseling session where the counselor helped you to name a regret or mistake of the past that you couldn't forgive *yourself* for.

Maybe the person you are struggling to forgive and trust is God himself. How could God allow this or that to happen to you and those you love.

When have you felt forgiven? Maybe a better question is, who do you trust?' Why do you trust them. Is it Beauce they have never

let you down... or is it because when they do let you down they own it and seek to make it right.'

The reality is we never really grow out of making mistakes, the little ones or the big ones. The art of forgiveness, is perhaps the most needed and powerful force in the world.

...for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. – Jeremiah 31:34

This is a fairly revolutionary thing for Jeremiah to claim on behalf of God. That the creator of our coworker, and spouse, our family and community will not hold our mistakes or doubts against us. That God in fact, knows us. That God would not be so much concerned about our mistakes, but how to make things right again. And yet the overarching good news found in the Bible is exactly this. It isn't a story of how people got life right. It is a story of how God steps in when things don't go right.

Jesus declares to us... through the prophet Jeremiah thousands of years ago, the purpose and business of heaven. Forgiveness! (Don't get in the way of this business, especially for the little one – thus the threat about millstones.)

The work of the church is not to make God known... all human beings have a general sense of what is expected of them... what is right and ethical in this world... what makes for a good human being worth spending our time with.

That law is already written in our hearts, from the greatest to the least. The most ethical to the least. The most responsible to the least. The most successful to the least. The greatest sinner to the least.

When the church points out sin, or your spouse for that matter... When your sin is named, it is not because the answer is knowing better... The sin is named because that is the only way forgiveness and healing can begin.

‘Ouch that hurt... our relationship has been affected... lets get to the bottom of this so I can learn to trust you again.’ Because even more valuable than performance and ethics is our ability... and need... to trust the people in our lives.

When have you felt forgiven? And how did it make you feel... what was the result – healing? Confidence? Connection? Trust? . Often the people we trust most are those we have been through the most ‘stuff’ with because forgiveness is that powerful!

This is who you are. This is the Kingdom life.

You are a part of a Kingdom that is good at forgiveness partly because you have been doing this your whole life... it is kind of the center of the church life we live... But most importantly... you are good at forgiveness because you hold on to a promise that no other institution or tribe has to offer. That God has forgiven humanity. Specifically, God has forgiven you. How do we know this... it is the great narrative of the Bible – that is why we read it. And it is the gift of the church – prayer, worship, bible and instruction in the Christian faith all center on the theme of hearing and therefor knowing where you stand with God.

Where do you stand? The Sunday school teacher, grandma and grandpa, pastors and youth group all have the same answer to give... forgiven.

...for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. – Jeremiah 31:34

The joy of forgiveness is the business of heaven... All that the church is and all the spiritual forces the church is moved by... creates the forgiveness and healing this world so desperately needs.

Thanks be to God.



*Christ with children, by [Carl Heinrich Bloch](#)