



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

July 9-15, 2018

3rd Sunday in Sermon Series: *The Summer of Forgiveness*

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester: "Forgiving the Unforgiveable"

Notes from sermon on 7/8:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

What do you believe happened to the first criminal in Luke 23:32-43?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. In this sermon, Doug describes a God who is patient with us as we struggle to truly forgive. Is this how you understand or experience God?
 2. Can God forgive our inability to forgive?
3. What issue that requires forgiveness have you been holding onto for too long?

Monday, July 9: Read Luke 23:32-43

Sometimes, it seems impossible to forgive. Some of us have had unimaginably horrible things done to us or our loved ones. Last week, our scripture readings clearly stated that our ability to receive and accept forgiveness by God is linked to our ability to forgive others. But what if we just can't? At least, not right now? Is forgiveness completely binary: either we forgive completely or not at all? Is there room for process; for nuance? Can God forgive our inability to forgive?

Today's gospel reading shows the most incredible act of forgiveness the world has ever seen: Jesus on the cross, forgiving those who have betrayed, tortured, and crucified him. This unfathomable degree of forgiveness sets the standard to which we should all aspire in our quest to become like Christ. But before we fear God's condemnation for not being ready, let us also recognize in this passage the grace of God's timing. The second criminal did not turn to Christ until the very last moments of his life, yet was given the promise of Paradise that very day. Even the first criminal was not condemned by Christ, and seems to represent the "work on progress" that we all are. Today, let us give thanks to our infinitely patient God.

Tuesday, July 10: Read Micah 7:14-17

The prophet Micah spoke to the people of Judah during a time of terrible fear and warfare, as they struggled not only with pagan foreign invaders, but their own idolatry and sins against the poor, weak, and marginalized. Both foreign nations and God's chosen people, the "flock of [God's] inheritance" were in need of forgiveness and of forgiving. In this passage, Micah demonstrates an awareness of and faith in God's ultimate plan to bring all nations to repentance. One can also see, however, Micah's very human anger against these nations at the time of writing, perhaps relishing the foreseen pain and suffering of these nations a bit more than he "should." Perhaps seeing God's ultimate patience juxtaposed against humankind's temporal emotions in scripture can give us hope and perspective that God understands lack of forgiveness as a work-in-progress, and we can ask God to shepherd all of us (vs. 14) into the pastures of peace and joy that come with forgiving and being forgiven.

Wednesday, July 11: Read Micah 7:18-20

In today's passage, Micah shows a deep faith that God will forgive all the iniquities of his chosen people, the Jews. He marvels at God's ability to forgive and have compassion on sinners. What Micah does not mention here, however, is God's ability to forgive and have compassion for the enemies of the people of Israel. In fact, many of the writers in the Old Testament do not extend God's love and mercy to their enemies. That degree of forgiveness will take time and, most of all, God's grace. We see glimpses of it in places like Jonah, when God forgives the people of Ninevah, Israel's arch enemy, but we will not see it in full until we encounter it in the teachings, example, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today, let us all be aware of our own need of God's infinite grace, both in being forgiven and in forgiving others.

Thursday, July 12: Read Isaiah 1:16-20

Like Micah, the prophet in today's scripture from Isaiah is trying to reach the sinful people of Judah who have turned away from God and will soon be conquered by their enemies. While Jerusalem managed to withstand the invasion of the Assyrians that decimated the northern kingdom of Israel, it will be conquered by Babylon, resulting in its people's exile for 40 years. We focus on this history today as we read this passage because it gives us perspective into God's timing. While the people of Judah did not immediately "remove the evil of [their] deeds," resulting in much pain and hardship, God's promises of grace and forgiveness, of washing their sins "white as snow" stand eternal. The people of Judah will be allowed to return to Jerusalem. All the people of the earth will be offered grace and forgiveness through Christ. While we can save ourselves much pain in the short term by immediately turning to God in asking forgiveness and forgiving others, we can still have faith in God's infinite patience with us.

Friday, July 13: Read Luke 6:27-37

On Monday, we read of Christ's radical and unbelievable act of forgiving the unforgiveable, offering the world God's grace and forgiveness through his own sacrifice on the cross. Today, we rewind to Christ's radical and unbelievable teachings on offering forgiveness and grace to others. We know that we cannot begin to show this degree of love and forgiveness to our enemies without first being shown this love and forgiveness by Christ. We cannot look past the sins in others without first recognizing the sins in our selves. In our lifelong journey to become like Christ, let us always focus on what Christ did for us and ask God to continually shepherd us toward the ability to forgive others as we have been forgiven.

Saturday, July 14: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Isaiah 1:18b

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Sunday, July 15: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of

Common Confession: *O God of Shalom, we have built up walls to protect ourselves from our enemies, but these walls also shut us off from receiving your love. Break down those walls. Help us to see that the way to your heart is through the reconciliation of our own hearts with our enemies. Bless them and that we may come to grow in love for each other and for you; through Jesus Christ. Amen.*