



# grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

July 16-22, 2018

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Sermon Series: The Summer of Forgiveness

Sermon by Rev. Kelley Lane: *Don't Let the Sun Go Down*

Notes from sermon on 7/15:

Prayer requests:

**Family Focus Questions (before sermon):**

When you are angry at someone how do you manage to let go of your anger and forgive them?  
Do you have any techniques you have found helpful?

**3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):**

1. What is more difficult for you – to ask for forgiveness when you have hurt someone or to offer another person forgiveness when they have hurt you?
2. Is it easier for you to forgive another person when they make a mistake or to forgive yourself when you have erred?
3. What might God be calling you to do in response to Jonah's story? Whom do you need to forgive?

**Monday, July 16: Read Jonah 3:1-10**

Last week we explored how difficult it can be to forgive someone who has done something terrible to us, and how we can have faith in God's patience with us as we learn to forgive. This week, we will continue our study on forgiveness by exploring how we feel when God forgives our enemies...before we do. Most of us who ever attended a Vacation Bible School are familiar with the story from the first two chapters in the book of Jonah – you know, where Jonah is swallowed by a big fish. This week we read the last two chapters in this short book. Here, we see a theme that isn't always present in other books of the Old Testament: God's love for and forgiveness of Israel's enemies. And Jonah isn't happy about it.

After (finally) agreeing to go to Nineveh, the most populous city in the dreaded Assyrian empire, Jonah happily prophesied its destruction and doom (hurray for God's ultimate justice, right?!) Then something incredible happened- the people repented, and God forgave. Period. How do you think Jonah felt? How would you feel? Are we waiting for God to ultimately strike down our enemies...for "justice to be served"... or are we truly praying for their repentance and salvation?

**Tuesday, July 17: Read Jonah 4:1-11**

“Is it right for you to be angry?” God asks this question twice of Jonah in today’s reading during Jonah’s colossal and kind of funny temper tantrum. How many of us have experienced a similar scene with a child (or ourselves) when something was deemed “not fair”? Notice how Jonah began his speech to God acknowledging that God is gracious, slow to anger, and ready to relent from punishing. Did Jonah think that just meant for the people of Israel? Similarly, when we ask for forgiveness and praise God’s mercy, do we deep down just think this applies to us and our loved ones? Perhaps we hope our enemies will ultimately be redeemed, but not before they suffer...at least a little. How would we really feel if those individuals, groups, and nations in the world who have committed atrocities against God’s children suddenly turned to God and were absolved of their sins, no questions asked? Are we praying for this?

**Wednesday, July 18: Read Romans 12: 14-18**

In some Bibles, today’s scripture appears under the heading, “Marks of the True Christian.” Ouch. Even if we try on the surface to “bless” our enemies and refrain from cursing them (at least out loud), are we secretly counting on God to even the score in the long run? It’s easy to be happy for our friends when they are happy, but do we also rejoice with the good fortune of a competitor? Weep for the pain of a former bully when they are publicly humiliated and brought down? Or do we suffer from the same schadenfreude as the rest of the world, getting that thrill when we see others fall from grace?

**Thursday, July 19: Read Romans 12:19-21**

Today’s scripture is confusing, and often misunderstood. Sure, many of us can pretend to be nice to our enemies if deep down, we are helping God ultimately shame them and make them pay for the pain they have caused us. Isn’t that what heaping burning coals on their heads means? Well, not exactly. Yes, this Old Testament act was an act of repentance, but one that brought purification and forgiveness. Our kindness to our enemies is meant to help lead them into the light, not ensure they hit rock bottom. Today, let us ask for God’s strength and grace to not only show kindness and forgiveness to those who have hurt us, but to do it with the right intentions. Let us strive to show God’s love to those who have not shown us love; demonstrate forgiveness to those who hold unfair grudges against us. Let us look at each and every person in the world as one of God’s children – one who may be held in evil’s grasp, but one we desperately want to join us in God’s kingdom of freedom, righteousness, and eternal joy and peace.

**Friday, July 20: Read Luke 6:27-38**

We return today to the seemingly impossible commandments of Christ in regards to how we interact with our enemies. Love them. Turn the other cheek. Give more than they (already unfairly?) ask. Love them, expecting nothing in return. Perhaps that includes God really sticking it to them in the end. We all pray for mercy over justice for ourselves, for we know that we are all like the slave owing ten thousand talents, whom we studied a few weeks ago. None of us really wants justice from God, because then we would all be in big trouble. What we receive instead, miraculously, is grace and mercy. Truly loving our enemies means wishing the same for them, also. Who in our lives are we pretending we have forgiven, but are deep down just waiting for God to strike them down? What act of kindness, witness, and love can we show them that could help them receive God’s forgiveness and grace?

**Saturday, July 21: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Romans 12:14**

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.”

**Sunday, July 22: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common**

**Confession:** *Almighty and merciful God, we know that when we offend another, we offend you.*

*We are aware that we have often allowed the shadow of hate to cloud our souls, hiding the light from our unseeking eyes. We have said unpleasant and hurtful things to our brothers and sisters when they failed to live up to our expectations. Grant that we might find that spark of love that ever burns within us, the love that you have shown to us even when we failed you. Fan the embers of that love until it roars again in flames of love, peace, and reconciliation. Forgive us our sins and help us to forgive those who have sinned against us. Lead us into new life through your Son Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of all. Amen. [Michael J. O’Donnell, 20<sup>th</sup> Cent.]*