



from the desk of . . .  
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## The Apostles' Creed - 11

### ... THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Luke 11:2-4

Last February 24<sup>th</sup> we witnessed powerfully the love & grace & forgiveness of Jesus Christ. I truly hope you were here to experience it. It took place down in Dr. Young Hall, where we, once again, hosted the Rolling Meadows' Community Prayer Breakfast.



(X) I invited Barb Mangi to come & share her story. How many of you were here? ...

Early on a Sunday morning,  
18 August 2008, Barb received a phone call that no parent expects & every parent dreads to receive.

Her 25-year daughter, Dana, (X) who had just been accepted to Veterinarian School, had been murdered by a friend.



Barb shared with us her pain, anger, & an almost suffocating sadness. But forgiveness? ... No. Even though she suspected almost from the 1<sup>st</sup> that her big-hearted daughter would have forgiven the college friend who stabbed & strangled her ... she could not.

Even as Barb, a devout Catholic, came to believe that God Himself wanted her to forgive Dana's killer ... she resisted.

"God, don't you make any exceptions?" she would ask.

"You must. You must make exceptions. I know we're supposed to forgive people who hurt us ... but this is the extreme situation. This kid murdered my daughter. If you're going to want me to forgive this person, you're going to have to make it happen ... because I just can't."

Barb had us spellbound as she detailed her long journey to forgiveness. She not only eventually forgave Patrick Ford, the man who killed her daughter in his Lakeview apartment; Barb actually thanked Ford for his 2010 courtroom apology, & since 2014 has been exchanging letters with him from prison, where he's serving a 35-year term for 1<sup>st</sup>-degree murder.

Barb told us that she & Ford aren't "friends" in the usual casual & confiding sense, but they are "friends" of a sort, jointly working toward spiritual healing in the aftermath of a catastrophic loss.

She said ... "I've been able to help him to forgive himself & to heal, which is something I could never have imagined would ever happen to me in my life. I just feel like God has been with me throughout this whole journey helping me — I don't know how else to explain it."

It was an incredibly powerful testimony.

Listen now to *Good News*, as recorded by Luke, to you who have gathered here at C.C.R.M. for worship.  
 Within your hearing comes the Word of the Lord ...

Jesus said to them, "When you pray, say this:

'Father: May your holy name be honored;  
 may your Kingdom come.

Give us day by day the food we need.

Forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone  
 who does us wrong.'" (Luke 11:2-4)

**May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His Heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification. Amen**

This morning we're going to talk about how to make a wrong right. Actually, how God makes a wrong right. And then how He commands us to make wrongs right in our lives. We're looking at the forgiveness of sins.

Now "forgiveness" is an often used, but a totally misunderstood term in Scripture. And let's be honest, it's a concept that's easier to talk about than to act on.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, & there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise & do what is right: he will forgive us our sins & purify us from all our wrongdoing."

(1 John 1:8-9)

John's writing about the fact that we can be assured of forgiveness of sin if we acknowledge that sin to God. And I want to talk about what that means, but let me 1<sup>st</sup> say, so there's no misunderstanding ... this is by no means giving us **permission** to sin as much as we want.

John goes on ... "I am writing this to you ... so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf - Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, & not our sins only, but also the sins of everyone.

"If we obey God's commands, then we are sure that we know him. If we say that we know him, but do not obey his commands, we are liars & there is no truth in us."

(1 John 2:1-4)

So, this morning we're going to take the forgiveness test. Now I want all of you to do well in this test, so, let me give you some study notes.

1<sup>st</sup> let's look at the forgiveness formula.

It goes like this ...

**sin + confession + repentance = eternal forgiveness**

I love the story about a S.S. teacher who had just finished a lesson on Christian behavior & forgiveness. She asked one of the boys ...

"Now Billy, when we talk about forgiveness, what must we do before we can expect to be forgiven of our sins?"

Billy thought for a moment & then responded ...

"Well, 1<sup>st</sup> we've got to sin."

That's true ... but Scripture teaches that's not a problem for us. (X) "Everyone has sinned & is far away from God's saving presence."

For ALL  
Have  
Sinned...

(Romans 3:23)

And so just to confirm that, please turn to the person beside you & tell them your worst sin this past week. ... Scared you, didn't I? ...

But that's the next thing I want to talk about ... confession. We start with the sin, but then we need to add confession. Forgiveness is not granted **automatically** to the world via the **cross**. God has prerequisites.

1<sup>st</sup> comes confession. When (X) "we confess our sins to God ... he will forgive us our sins & purify us from all our wrongdoing."

**CONFESS.**

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO FORGIVE US THE SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.  
1 JOHN 1:9

Listen to David's confession in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm.

"Wash away all my evil & make me clean from my sin!

I recognize my faults; I am always conscious of my sins.

I have sinned against you - only against you -  
& done what you consider evil.

So you are right in judging me;  
you are justified in condemning me." (The Psalms 51:2-4)

That's what our confessions need to be about.  
Not some general thing but pointed & direct.

It's not minimizing the guilt,  
or depriving God the right to judge.

"I recognize my faults; I am always conscious of my sins."

But confession is more than just verbal  
acknowledgement. There also must be repentance. (X)

And repentance means a 180-degree turn. It  
means a change of attitude, a change of behavior.

We must repent of our sins & turn to God & do  
the things that would show we have repented.



David goes on.

"You do not want sacrifices, or I would offer them;  
you are not pleased with burnt offerings.

My sacrifice is a humble spirit, O God;  
you will not reject a humble & repentant heart."

(The Psalms 51:16-17)

Now there are 2 types of confession.

The 1<sup>st</sup> kind is motivated primarily by the fear of  
punishment. This confession takes place when we've been  
caught doing something wrong. (I'd like to say that this  
kind usually deals with kids, but I suspect we adults are  
pretty good with this one too.) We're not really sorry  
for what we've done ... we're sorry that we got caught;  
that other people see this sin in us.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> confession comes when we're deeply repentant.

This is David's type.

It's a genuine sorrow for having offended God.

Our sins affect a lot of people, but above all, our sins hurt God. ... "I have sinned against you - only against you - & done what you consider evil."

So, if we confess our sin, & truly repent ... the result will be forgiveness. But let me warn you, the worst thing we can do is to take this procedure nonchalantly; just take it for granted.

"I can do whatever I want, & God, as my loving Heavenly Father, will forgive me." (Romans 6:1)

That's a distorted view; almost arrogant. It's a presumption that believes the forgiveness of God is our due; it's what we deserve. That view makes grace cheap. It makes it worthless.

So, what type of forgiveness are we talking about then? ... Let me clear up a common misunderstanding of forgiveness. The question is sometimes asked ...

"If Jesus has died for me, & I have received the full forgiveness of my sins, past, present, & future, doesn't that mean that I don't have to confess them anymore?"

Let me explain this. When a person comes to faith, they recognize their sins & make a contrite confession. And at that point they are saved by grace. And their standing before God is one of being completely forgiven: of past, present, & future sins.

Let me repeat a story I know I've told you before.

A woman visits her Pastor, & tells him that when she prays she sees Jesus in a vision. "He appears to me as real as you standing right here. And He speaks to me."

The Pastor was a little skeptical, so he decided to put her to a test. He wanted her to ask Jesus a question. "When Jesus appears to you again, ask Him to tell you the horrible sin that I committed while I was in Seminary. Then tell me what He said."

A few days later the woman returned. "Did you have another vision of Jesus?" the Pastor asked.

"Yes, I did."

"Did you ask Him my question?"

"Yes."

"Well, what did He say?"

"He said ... 'I don't remember.'"

That's what it's all about. When we're **forgiven** ...  
 He's **forgotten** our past, present, & future sins.  
 However, we're all in an ongoing relationship with God,  
 & sin blocks intimacy anytime it gets into a relationship.  
 In any relationship, when **sin** has damaged it,  
 there needs to be **confession & repentance**,  
 for **reconciliation** to take place.

I believe that confession is commanded,  
 not so much, because God needs it in order to forgive,  
 but because we need it in order to heal & be changed.

Confession is not an accounting procedure ...  
it's a **healing process**.

So, are you ready to take the forgiveness test? ...

- Do you honestly realize that you're a sinner?
- Do you recognize that Jesus wants to be your Savior?
- Are you willing to confess your sins to Him?
- Will you live in a daily relationship with the Lord?

If you've answered in the affirmative those questions ... you've passed the test. But, you can't stop there. After we take the forgiveness test, we need to follow the forgiveness procedure.

In other words, once we're forgiven, there's something that God expects of us.

I don't know about you, but hardly a day goes by that I don't praise Him for forgiving my sins.

That's something that I'll never take for granted. My sin is always before me, & the fact that I know that it's forgiven ... never ceases to amaze me.

However, let's be honest, (remember Barb), it's much easier for us to accept God's forgiveness of our sins, than it is for us to forgive other people's sins against us.

Let's look at a story that Jesus told. (X)  
"Then Peter came to Jesus & asked, 'Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? 7 times?'"



(Matthew 18:21)

Peter's talking about multiple, repeated forgiveness. You know, it's often easier to forgive a one-time offense than it is to forgive someone over & over & over again.

Every one of us has an irritating source in our lives ... a person, who's like a piece of sandpaper, & just keeps rubbing us the wrong way. And that's the kind of individual that Peter's talking about.

How many times must I forgive this "jerk" when he/she keeps on pushing my buttons? ...

He/she keeps on making my life miserable.

I love the little poem ...

To dwell above with those we love,

Ah, that will be eternal glory.

To dwell below with those we know ...

Well, that's another story.

More than likely Peter is thinking about a specific person & sin. But regardless,

Peter's being extremely generous when he asks ...

"How many times do I have to forgive? 7 times?"

He's expecting Jesus to respond ...

"Wow! Peter! That's fantastic! You're a super Christian!

I wish everybody was as good as you."

You see, Jewish Law only required that you only forgive somebody 3 times. And Peter is saying ...

"I'll double that & spot you one."

But Jesus turns the tables on him, & Peter's taken back to hear the Lord say, "No, not 7 times, but 70 x 7."

(Matthew 18:22)

In other words, there's **no** limit to when we should stop **forgiving**. Plus, Jesus is pointing out that if we're keeping score, it's really not forgiveness in the 1<sup>st</sup> place, because we're waiting for that 8<sup>th</sup> time! (X)

What if God kept score with us? ...

That wouldn't be grace.



So, let me summarize the rest of the story where Jesus is explaining why we must learn to forgive.

There was a man who was hopelessly in debt to the king. The king had called in all of his accounts. And this man, who had been really bad with his money, owed millions of \$'s. He had major debt.

In those days, the penalty for bankruptcy was really simple. There was no attorney ... Peter Francis Geraci. There was no chapter 11. The king would take your wife & kids & sell them into slavery, & put you in prison ...  
simple, done, over with.

So, the man begs ... "Be patient with me, & I will pay you everything!" (Matthew 18:26) (Apparently, he was hoping that a rich uncle would come to his rescue.) "Just give me a few more days." But even if he could repay at \$5,280 a day ... it'd take years to cancel the debt.

There's no way that he's ever going to get rid of it.

So, Jesus teaches us 3 things in this story on how to follow the forgiveness procedure.

#1 ... I need to learn to **forgive** because God has **forgiven** me. "The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt & let him go." (Matthew 18:27)  
No strings attached ... free gift.

Jesus is using the king to describe the grace we discussed earlier. Can you imagine how this man must have felt when that millions of \$'s of debt was lifted? ...  
Relief ... joy ... excitement ... freedom ... gratitude.

"Then the man went out & met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few \$'s. He grabbed him & started choking him. 'Pay back what you owe me!'" (Matthew 18:28)

Picture the scene.

Here's a man who has just had his debt of millions of \$'s cancelled. And he goes to an acquaintance demanding a couple of bucks. And because that poor fellow couldn't repay those few \$'s ... he had him thrown into jail.

Now the tragedy is that many of us, as grace filled, forgiven followers of Jesus, live just this way. We **readily accept** all of God's grace for us, but we **refuse** to extend any grace to the person who has hurt us.

If you've received God's forgiveness ... if you're a beneficiary of His grace ... then you've been set apart as someone who is in Christ. And here's what that means ...

"You are like light for the whole world." (Matthew 5:14)

"You are like salt for the whole human race." (Matthew 5:13)

You are "a child of God." (1 John 3:1)

You are "God's friend." (John 15:15)

You share "the glory of the Lord Jesus." (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

"You are God's Temple & ... God's Spirit lives in you!"  
(1 Corinthians 3:16)

"You are Christ's body." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

You are "a new being." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

You are "a saint." (Ephesians 1:1)

You are "the result of God's good work." (Philippians 1:6)

You are "a member of the family of God." (Ephesians 2:19)

You are "holy, pure, & faultless." (Colossians 1:22)

You are one of God's "living stones." (1 Peter 2:5)

You are "a citizen of Heaven." (Philippians 3:20)

That's who you are ... if you've been forgiven.

And this man in Jesus' story doesn't get it.

Because when we truly recognize that we're forgiven ...  
then we will forgive others.

Notice his harshness. He grabs the man & chokes him. Roman law actually allowed you to choke someone if they owed you money. And then he had him thrown in jail ... all because of a few bucks.

Whenever we find someone who's judgmental & ungracious & unforgiving when they discover that others have fallen into sin, when there's almost a kind of satisfaction about it, we can count on one thing ... there's some unresolved guilt going on in their own lives.

How many of you have heard of Corrie ten Boom? ...

She was a remarkable woman who lived in Holland during WWII. Corrie, along with her father & sister, Betsie, helped rescue Jews during the Nazi occupation.

Her story was told in the book & movie,  
"The Hiding Place."

She & her family were eventually caught & sent to Ravensbruck, one of the worst of the Nazi Concentration Camps, where Corrie's father & sister died. Through a clerical error, Corrie was released just days before her own scheduled execution.

During the next 20 years she traveled the globe testifying to God's love in the midst of the most horrible conditions we can't even imagine. And that's where I want to pick up her story as she talks about one of the meetings she spoke at.

### Video ("How To Forgive" by Corrie ten Boom ... 7:15)

When we follow Christ's program to **forgive** ... He does **empower**. He does supply the strength, the energy, the peace that we need. Forgiveness is a commandment.



(X) "Get rid of all bitterness, passion, & anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind & tender-hearted to one another, & forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ."

(Ephesians 4:31-32)

The key to forgiveness is to recognize how much God forgives you/me every day.

And when I feel **forgiven** ... I'm going to be **forgiving**.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing we get from this passage is that we need to learn to forgive because **resentment** makes us **miserable**. Resentment is torture on earth.

"When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset & went to the king & told him everything." (Matthew 18:31) The king called in the servant & said, "if you're going to be this way, unforgiving, then I'm going to be unforgiving." And he threw him into jail.

And jail in those days was a torture chamber.

It robbed a person of their joy.

Is there a bitter memory that's robbing you of happiness? ... What hurt are you still holding on to? ...



(X) Leonardo da Vinci was painting "The Last Supper", & he had an enemy. So, he painted that enemies' face on his caricature of Judas. But Leonardo couldn't complete his masterpiece; he was unable to paint the face of Jesus.

So, he prayed about it, & he realized that he needed to forgive his enemy.

And when he did, & changed the face of Judas, he was able to finish "The Last Supper" by painting the face of Jesus.

Is there something that's holding you back from the face of Christ? ... Is there some unforgiven sin that needs to be dealt with? ... Is there someone that you're not willing to extend forgiveness to? ... That is robbing you of the joy that Jesus promises you. (John 15:11)

3<sup>rd</sup>, I need to learn to **forgive** because I'll need **forgiveness** in the future.

"And Jesus concluded, 'That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.'" (Matthew 18:35)

I'm reminded of that every time I hear someone say ... "I'll never forgive that person." My response, "well, I hope you never sin." Think about the Lord's Prayer that we'll be praying in a few moments.

"Forgive us the wrongs we have done,  
as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us."

This story that Jesus told teaches us that forgiveness is a way of life. And it's the only way that we'll ever have joy or peace. You're imperfect ... & so am I. We have to live in a constant state of forgiveness.

You may wonder, is forgiveness fair?  
No, it's not fair. But, do you know what? ...  
Jesus forgiving us our sins ... is that fair?

Let me tell you what forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is not minimizing the seriousness of the offense. There's a difference between forgiveness & acceptance.

And forgiveness doesn't mean instant restoration of trust. Forgiveness is immediate. But trust must be rebuilt over a period of time. And if someone has betrayed you ... you don't instantly trust them again. Scripture teaches that we're obligated to forgive them ... but we're not obligated to instantly trust them.

Forgiveness means that we're going to let go of the hurt, but the other person will have to do some things to rebuild the trust. Forgiveness is our responsibility.

Rebuilding trust is theirs.

You see, forgiveness is not resuming a relationship without some changes. We need 3 things if the relationship is going to be restored. We need genuine repentance ... restitution when necessary ...

& the rebuilding of trust.

But our forgiveness is not based on their response ... whether they ask for it or not, whether they accept it or not, or even whether they acknowledge it or not.

We forgive because God has forgiven us.

So, now it's up to us.

What are you being called & convicted to do this morning? ... Are there some forgiveness action steps that you need to take? ...

Once again, the forgiveness test:

- Do you honestly realize that you're a sinner?
- Do you recognize that Jesus wants to be your Savior?
- Are you willing to confess your sins to Him?
- Will you live in a daily relationship with the Lord?

Here's the blame test:

- Do you blame someone else for your unhappiness?  
If you do it's an indication of resentment.  
And you need to let it go.

Here's the bitterness test:

- Have you been keeping score in your relationships?
- Are you holding things over someone else's head?  
You're killing the relationship if you are.

And finally, the behavior test:

- Close your eyes, let God's Spirit move your mind & think of the people you're acquainted with ... is there anyone that you need to improve your behavior with? Is there anyone you need to spend some time forgiving? How about in your family? How about in our congregation? What does Jesus want you to do?

**MARANA THA**

Jesus said to them, "When you pray, say this: 'Father: May your holy name be honored; may your Kingdom come. Give us day by day the food we need. Forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who does us wrong.'" (Luke 11:2-4)

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing." (1 John 1:8-9)

Forgiveness, by no means, gives us \_\_\_\_\_ to sin as much as we want

\_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Forgiveness is not granted \_\_\_\_\_ to the world via the \_\_\_\_\_

When we're \_\_\_\_\_ ... God's \_\_\_\_\_ our past, present, and future sins

In any relationship, when \_\_\_\_\_ has damaged it, there needs to be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_ to take place

Confession is not an accounting procedure ... it's a \_\_\_\_\_

There's \_\_\_\_\_ limit to when we should stop \_\_\_\_\_

I need to learn to \_\_\_\_\_ because God has \_\_\_\_\_ me

We \_\_\_\_\_ all of God's grace for us, but we \_\_\_\_\_ to extend any grace to the person who has hurt us

When we follow Christ's program to \_\_\_\_\_ ... He does \_\_\_\_\_

When I feel \_\_\_\_\_ ... I'm going to be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ makes us \_\_\_\_\_

I need to learn to \_\_\_\_\_ because I'll need \_\_\_\_\_ in the future

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven & earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, & buried;  
he descended into hell;  
the 3<sup>rd</sup> day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
& sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the living & the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit;  
the holy Christian Church;  
the communion of saints;  
**the forgiveness of sins;**  
the resurrection of the body;  
& the life everlasting.

Amen