



The Beautiful Community: Forgiveness

Key idea:

To express the love of the Trinity, the Church must be a beautiful community where the forgiveness offered in the Gospel is celebrated, received, and given.

Key text:

Ephesians 4:29–5:2

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

^{5:1} Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Key points:

1. The biblical call to forgiveness is built upon the life and character of the Holy Trinity.
2. The Church is called to be the beautiful community where the forgiveness of sins offered in the Gospel is received, recounted, and celebrated.
3. As those who have been forgiven by God, Christians are commanded to extend forgiveness to others, and if we do not we are disobedient and grieve the Holy Spirit.
4. Forgiveness produces a change in my attitudes, words, and actions towards the other person.
5. Forgiveness is always costly; but unforgiveness is even more costly, destroying relationships and distorting the one who refuses to forgive.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?

2. Why does Paul base the call to forgiveness in the life and character of the Trinity?
3. How important is forgiveness to the life of a Christian? To the worship of the Church? To the experience and proclamation of the Gospel?
4. Paul says we are to forgive others “just as in Christ God forgave you.” How fully has God forgiven me in Christ? What is the effect of this forgiveness in God’s attitude and actions towards me? How does this apply to my forgiveness of others?
5. In Ephesians 4:29-32 Paul describes a number of changes in my words, attitudes, and actions that true forgiveness will produce in my relationship with others. How complete does this change seem to be? What is Paul trying to convey regarding the nature of true forgiveness?
6. Why does Paul bring up Christ the fact that “Christ gave Himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”? What does the word “sacrifice” connote about forgiveness? What does “fragrant offering” connote about forgiveness?
7. What are the fruits of unforgiveness? What does it do to relationships? What does it do to the person who I refuse to forgive? What does it do to my own soul and body? In the end, what is more costly - forgiveness or unforgiveness?
8. CS Lewis said, “To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable in others because Christ has forgiven the inexcusable in me.” What does the word ‘inexcusable’ tell me about the nature of forgiveness?
9. In the Lord’s Prayer we are taught to pray “Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.” What does Jesus link the forgiveness of my sins before God with my willingness to forgive others? Do I really think about this when I pray the Lord’s Prayer? What change should it make in my life?
10. Does forgiveness mean that there are no consequences for sin? Why or why not?
11. Is the Spirit bringing any specific person to mind who I have not forgiven? If so, am I willing to forgive the person as God has forgiven me?
12. Who will I call to encourage this week? What specific members of BRCC will I commit before God to call?