

Theme: 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.

I. Intro - Cancel Culture

- A. Cancel culture - the current atmosphere of the extreme judgment of actions, words, or lack of them
- B. Not just holding people accountable - essentially the attempt to remove and silence them forever
- C. Many on all sides are now recognizing this has gone too far - but we all have a tendency to want revenge
- D. How can the church be a beautiful community rather than our own cancel culture?

II. The Trinity, Forgiveness, and the Gospel

- A. The Trinity is woven into this passage on forgiveness
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. Ephesians 4:30–32
 - 1. Holy Spirit, Christ, God - the Trinity (again!)
 - 2. Another essential aspect of life built upon the Trinity
 - 3. Paul is not just making an appeal for forgiveness, but a call for forgiveness built upon the life and character of the Holy Trinity.
- B. The call here is for forgiveness based on Trinitarian love
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 ²and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 4:32–5:2

- 1. Forgiveness, love, Christ's sacrificial death which opened up forgiveness for us!
- 2. Forgiveness is only possible because love is an essential trait of the very nature of the Trinity.
- 3. If God is not love, we would live in a cosmic cancel culture, but because the essence of the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit is love, forgiveness flows to cover and cleanse sin.
- 4. Forgiveness for real, egregious sin is a visible expression of the love of God in our fallen, sin-soaked cosmos.

C. Forgiveness lies at the center of the Gospel

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- 1. The Good News centers on God's forgiveness of our sins, our cosmic rebellion, because of Christ's work on our behalf.
- 2. In the Creed, we confess "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"!
- 3. Our songs, preaching, and the Lord's Table are a regular proclamation and celebration of the forgiveness of sins that lies at the center of our faith.
- 4. The Church is called to be the beautiful community where the forgiveness of sins offered in the Gospel is received, recounted, and celebrated.

III. The Beautiful Community of Forgiveness

A. We are called to extend forgiveness to others

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
Ephesians 4:32

1. The church is not only the community of those receiving forgiveness of sins from God but also the community of those who extend forgiveness for sin to others.
2. This not only means we extend the forgiveness of God to others in the Gospel, but that we personally forgive sins that others do to us in thought, word, and deed.
3. As a community built upon and pulsing with the life and character of the Trinity, the Church is to be the community where forgiveness, both divine and human, permeates everything.

B. Understanding & Practicing Trinitarian Forgiveness

1. We forgive one another as God has forgiven us

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

- a. We forgive others because God has forgiven us
- b. Trinitarian forgiveness flows from God's love for us, which is expressed in the free forgiveness of all our sins through Jesus' death for us.
- c. Jesus often linked the forgiveness of our sins with the requirement that we forgive the sins of others.
 1. The Lord's prayer - forgive us as we forgive others
 2. The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35)

2. Unforgiveness grieves the Holy Spirit

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
Ephesians 4:30

- a. There are of course many ways we could grieve the Holy Spirit - all sin grieves Him
- b. But the specific context here is relational sins, and especially forgiveness
- c. To refuse to forgive others grieves the Holy Spirit and dams up the free flow of God's love and forgiveness in my own life.
- d. Those who refuse to freely and fully forgive others can not experience the full and free forgiveness of God in their own life.

3. Forgiveness will produce a change in my attitudes and actions towards the other person

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. Ephesians 4:29-32

- a. Forgiveness will change my words about and to the person (v29; v31 - slander)
- b. Forgiveness will change my internal thoughts and attitudes regarding the person (v31)
- c. Forgiveness will change my actions towards the person to kindness and compassion (v32)

4. Forgiveness is costly!

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. Ephesians 5:1–2

a. For God to forgive us Jesus had to sacrifice Himself

b. Forgiveness is costly, not cheap!

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22

1. The Old Testament required blood sacrifice
2. To forgive sin is always costly, even requiring the shedding of blood and death
3. Jesus' death was not optional; it was essential for our sins to be forgiven.
4. For us to forgive the sin of others may feel like death!
5. The reason we do not want to forgive is that it seems so costly to do so. But the only thing more costly than forgiving the sin of another is unforgiveness!

5. "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable in others because Christ has forgiven the inexcusable in me." - CS Lewis "On Forgiveness"

IV. Applying the Word

A. The beautiful community of forgiveness in a cancel culture

1. One of the ugliest things in our culture right now is that we not only refuse to forgive, but we forever remember the worst things someone has done.
2. We continually dredge up old words or actions and refuse to forgive

3. This destroys marriages, friendships, churches, communities, and nations

4. But thankfully God is not like that!

5. What would it be like if our worst thoughts, words, and deeds were put on a permanent video loop for all to see?

6. What if when we stood before God this video of shame would be played?

7. But thanks be to God in Christ our sins are forgiven!

8. God has chosen to forgive the inexcusable in us!

9. This does NOT mean there are not sometimes consequences that continue as a result of sin

10. But the attitude must always be redemptive and forgiving - not narrow, bitter, and unforgiving

11. Will I extend this kind of forgiveness to others?

12. Will I extend this kind of forgiveness to not only my family and friends, but even to my enemies?

13. Will I forgive the inexcusable in others as God has forgiven it in me?

14. Is there anyone the Spirit is bringing to my mind that I need to consciously, specifically forgive?

B. A prayer of confession and forgiveness

The Beautiful Community - Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:29-32

July 26, 2020

Prayer

2 Corinthians 13:14

Teaching keywords: Church; Trinity; forgiveness

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2
Corinthians 13:14

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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
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