

Midweek Message 3-23-22, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, TX

Texts: Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.” John 12:26 (Jesus said)

Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

Being a servant of others and carrying the attitude of forgiveness is vitally important. Let’s first look at forgiveness.

Take the man in Jesus’ parable who owed his master a large sum of money, who begged mercy and was forgiven that debt, only to do out and see a man who owed him a small debt. He would not listen to the man’s cry for mercy and threw him in jail. The master heard about this and was angry that his gift of forgiveness was not passed on. The man had asked him for forgiveness when what he really wanted was to get off the hook. He did not want to pay back what he owed. He wanted to take advantage of his master. So the master called him back, withdrew his forgiveness of the debt and threw him into prison. (MT 18:23-35)

When Peter asked Jesus, how many times they should forgive their brother if he sins against them, Jesus answered seventy times seven. (MT 18:21-22)

Stephen was the first Christian martyr. You can read about him in Acts 7:60. He was being judged on trumped up charges but then looking like an angel said he could see God’s throne and Christ sitting by God. They took him out in a furor and stoned him, but before he died, he asked God not to hold their sin against them.

Have you kept your list of those who have wronged you forgiven or do you still hold a grudge against some person and seek some way to get vengeance?

Jesus said forgiveness was so important that in the Lord’s Prayer, he taught, it says forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. (Matthew 6:12) In other words, don’t forgive us if we do not forgive. That is what we’re praying.

There is a process of forgiving. First, pray for forgiveness for yourself. Pray for forgiveness for the other. Will the forgiveness since it is not a matter of feeling or emotion. Bless the other. Praise God. Do that over and over again until you don’t need to do it any longer. You’ll know when.

Secondly, talk to them: *Matthew 18: 15 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by*

*the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”*

In my hospital ministry, I knew two women with cancer – one in her 40s who was dying and needed to forgive an uncle who abused her years earlier. A second woman in her 70’s who was dying and her daughter wanted her mother’s forgiveness for something in their life time. One gave that forgiveness; the other refused. Where are you when it comes to forgiveness?

*“Father, forgive them. They know not what they do”* is Jesus showing us what He taught in action. It means forgiving regardless if the person is sorry or not.

Jesus said, “Follow me.” We are called to be a servant of others and the attitude of the servant needs to be one of forgiveness.

Luke 19 is a parable about being a servant. It reads: *12 He said, “A nobleman was called away to a distant empire to be crowned king and then return. 13 Before he left, he called together ten of his servants and divided among them ten pounds of silver, saying, ‘Invest this for me while I am gone.’ 14 But his people hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We do not want him to be our king.’ 15 “After he was crowned king, he returned and called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what their profits were. 16 The first servant reported, ‘Master, I invested your money and made ten times the original amount!’ 17 “‘Well done!’ the king exclaimed. ‘You are a good servant. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, so you will be governor of ten cities as your reward.’ 18 “The next servant reported, ‘Master, I invested your money and made five times the original amount.’ 19 “‘Well done!’ the king said. ‘You will be governor over five cities.’ 20 “But the third servant brought back only the original amount of money and said, ‘Master, I hid your money and kept it safe. 21 I was afraid because you are a hard man to deal with, taking what isn’t yours and harvesting crops you didn’t plant.’ 22 “‘You wicked servant!’ the king roared. ‘Your own words condemn you. If you knew that I’m a hard man who takes what isn’t mine and harvests crops I didn’t plant, 23 why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’ 24 “Then, turning to the others standing nearby, the king ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who has ten pounds.’ 25 “‘But, master,’ they said, ‘he already has ten pounds!’ 26 “‘Yes,’ the king replied, ‘and to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.’”*

Jesus asks us to be a servant who cares for others and forgives others when needed. Will you take that mark of discipleship and run with it? Amen