

Forgive Them

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[0 : 00] All right, let's go ahead and get started this morning, and we are looking in the book of Luke, chapter 23 and verse number 34.

If you would like to follow along with today's message and actually take your own notes, go ahead and head over to meetfaith.org, meetfaith.org, and latest message notes.

You can keep the notes there, and when you're done with it, email them to yourself so you'd have it for as long as you would like. Luke 23, verse 34, and we're focusing on the cross as we are nearing the resurrection.

We are looking at the events that unfold as Jesus was arrested, as Jesus was put before this mock trial. He was beaten.

We also look at the New Testament church as our example, as we're going to be looking today in what Jesus said in one of his sayings from the cross.

[1 : 05] And as we are on this side of Calvary, there are times when we look on our lives and we find that maybe we could use a little more excitement. We could use a little more enthusiasm for our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ, or maybe we find ourselves maybe lagging a little bit or lacking a little bit in the virtues that he has told us.

And as we think about revival, we think about the Old Testament church as our example. Because what was the message of the early church? The cross.

What was the message that the early church presented everywhere they went? Jesus Christ died on the cross. He rose again. And this is the gospel.

So as we're thinking about that, nearing the time where we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we have the trial.

We have the scourging. We have the crown of thorns. And then we get to the crucifixion itself. We read in Luke 23, verse 34, Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

[2 : 26] They divided his garments and cast lots. And if we look at the context of what is going on here, prior to this, they had led him there to Calvary.

They had placed him there on the cross. And in verse 34, this is where Jesus says, Father, forgive them.

They had come to the place called Calvary, verse 33. There they crucified him with the criminals, one on one hand, one on the other side. And then this is what he says.

So what does Jesus do when he's on the cross? He prays. So the first thing that we see when Jesus is hung there upon the cross, criminal on either side of him, Jesus prayed.

He said, Father, forgive them, for they don't even know what they're doing. At that most desperate time, Jesus being in pain, Jesus being humiliated, he prays.

[3 : 37] How often do we take the time to pray when things are difficult in our own lives? And I believe many in this day where Jesus was, and even in our day, many people become complacent about the seriousness of what took place on the cross of Calvary.

I don't have any problem with people wearing a cross. But I have a problem with people using the cross as a symbol and as it's just a symbol.

You know what? What took place on the cross? Jesus died on the cross for our sin. It's not just jewelry. It's not just something to identify as a Christian.

And it's like a bumper sticker that we put on. You know what? We have to live it out. It's not just the symbol that matters. It's what we do with it. And I believe there are many who have become complacent about the cross.

It was torture. It was a form of capital punishment. That is what the cross represents. The cross represents Jesus, God in the flesh, who died on the cross in our place.

[4 : 50] And so when we look upon the cross, what do we think? What do we realize and what do we understand about the cross? Do we see and do we really understand its full meaning?

And as we think about today, I know this morning during Sunday school we were talking about that the Apostle Paul and other disciples and the apostles really did believe that Jesus was going to come back in their lifetime.

And I think today as we look around us, I believe our age today is filled with the sign of the times. I think even more so than 2,000 years ago, obviously.

And the prophetic program is unfolding. Everything the Bible talks about that was prophesied to be taking place, I believe is taking place.

Now I'm not going to try to be a prophet and say the Lord is going to come back in our lifetime. But I believe based on the signs of the times, I believe He could. I believe He could come back today.

[5 : 51] And are we living in such a way that we are prepared and ready for Jesus Christ to come back? And we can be because of the cross. Amen? Jesus Christ died on the cross for us in our place.

And whether we realize it or not, time is running out. The longer that we are here, the closer we are. Not only to the day where we might breathe our last breath, but the day where Jesus Christ might come in the air.

Those who have died and gone before us in Christ will be raised first. And we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds. The Bible says, and so shall we forever be with the Lord.

That is only possible because of the cross of Jesus Christ. And just as Jesus did on the cross, I believe it's time to pray. I believe we need to be people of prayer.

And as we think about what is God doing in our life, and if we really are honest, we may be wondering, well, God, why are you not doing more in our life?

[7 : 01] Why are you not doing more in our midst? Why are we not seeing miracles taking place? Why are we not seeing people coming to know Jesus as their Savior? Why are we not seeing more people, people's lives change?

Well, maybe because we need to be revived. Maybe because the revival needs to begin in us. And we need to be a people of prayer. In his most difficult hour, Jesus prayed, Father.

D.O. Moody said this. He said, every great work of God can be traced to a kneeling figure. I believe that's true. As we think of all of the great men and women of faith down through the years, and we read their biographies, and we see all of the great things that God has done, the awesome things that God did as a result of their walk with God, their praying, I believe that what the power they saw was a direct result of the power they had in prayer.

They were people of prayer. And just as Moody said, every great work of God can be traced to a kneeling figure. Are we a people of prayer? Are we truly praying that God's work would be done? And I believe one of the prayers that we need to be praying is, God, will you do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, and that we may be revived.

[8 : 37] We see in 2 Chronicles 7-14, all the way back to the Old Testament, the Bible says, If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear them from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land.

Would it be safe to say that our land, this great land that we live in, needs to be healed, needs to be brought back together, needs to come back to God?

Well, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, not be haughty and point the finger, and it's everybody else's problem, but if we would humble ourselves and say, God, the problem starts here.

The problem starts with me, because am I everything I need to be? Am I as close to Christ as I need to be? Am I following Jesus as I ought to be?

And seek His face. Seek the face of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Seek the face of our Heavenly Father. Turn from their wicked ways. God says, then I'll hear. Then I'll forgive their sin and heal their land.

[9 : 53] What I'm doing is calling us to prayer. Prayer, personal prayer, prayer alone, prayer together, prayer times when we come together and have a concerted effort together to pray.

I think we need to come back to getting together periodically, the men coming together and praying fervently, the women at times coming together praying fervently, to pray for a work of God in our midst, pray for a work of God so that we can reach others with the gospel of Christ, that we might be able to reach our neighbors, might be able to reach coworkers with the gospel, and see the work that God can do in their life.

Because we have been given the message of reconciliation. Jesus was on the cross of Calvary, and He did it for you. He died in your place. He died in mine. And we can have, we can appreciate and enjoy the forgiveness of our sin.

So, how about we start with this prayer? God, please do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. With a limited number, we cannot do everything that we may feel that we would want to do. But if God does the work, He can do what we could never do. So, if God will accomplish it, there are things that God can accomplish that we can not even begin to comprehend, not even begin to understand.

[11 : 23] And we're all working. I don't believe there's anyone here that could be accused of not doing their part. Because everything that is being done around here, we have Sunday school teachers, we have people who help with the children, we have people who cut the grass, we have people who do all of the things and the chores.

And that is great. But God can accomplish so much more through us when He does the work. And all we are are the feet, the mouth, and the hands. And we just let Him accomplish His work.

So, what did Jesus do in His most difficult hour? He prayed. He prayed. What did He pray? He prayed a prayer of forgiveness. Imagine that.

Jesus humiliated. Jesus in pain. Jesus there on the cross, knowing that He was perfectly sinless. Knowing that He was completely innocent.

He was God in the flesh. And He's dying for those who are crucifying Him. And His first word from the cross is, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

[12 : 40] Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. And then, as we talked about last week, the soldiers beneath the cross were complacent.

They didn't care about what was going on up there. They were playing a game beneath the cross. And they were gambling for His clothes. So, forgive them.

What a good word that is. What would happen to us if it weren't for forgiveness? Where would we be if it were not for forgiveness of Jesus Christ?

Isn't it great that our record can be wiped clean? That we don't have to worry about what we've done or what we ever will do? Because it will not be held against us. What does God see when He looks upon someone who's been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ?

What does He see? He sees Jesus. He sees the righteousness of Christ rather than us. This was the message of the New Testament church.

[13 : 44] Jesus is God. He died on the cross in our place. And He rose again from the dead to prove that God was satisfied with this message.

So, what we need to do is be going out and finding those who need to hear. Joseph Parker, a 19th century English congregational minister, said this, I have a wonderful message.

If only I could find a sinner. Well, do you realize we don't have to look far to find someone who doesn't know Jesus Christ. And we have the message of reconciliation.

Christ was able to forgive sins. And that confounded the religious people of His day. Jesus Christ being able to say, Your sins are forgiven.

And He says that. And He has said that to us who have trusted Christ as our Savior. Are we guilty? Here's the good news.

[14 : 47] Jesus forgives. Anyone who's listening to the sound of this message, If you're feeling guilty, If you feel that you are not good enough to amount to being accepted by God, Know this, that Jesus Christ paid it all.

And He died for us. And He will forgive our sin. The good news is, Jesus forgives. Thirdly, what we see is, Not only in Jesus' most difficult hour He prayed, But He prayed for forgiveness from the Father for those who were crucifying Him.

For those who were His enemies. The Jews, the Romans, everyone who was there. He said, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. They don't know who they're crucifying. They don't know how they're playing a part in this grand prophetic story. They don't know that what is happening has to happen.

They're oblivious to all of this. So, Father, forgive them. They're just playing a role. And we are so thankful that Jesus Christ died on the cross so that He can forgive us.

[16:06] But then thirdly, what did Jesus pray? Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of those who had wronged Him. He said, forgive them.

What do we learn from this? Or what can we take away from this? When Jesus said, forgive them. They don't even know what they're doing.

This connecting word, then. Jesus had just been hung on the cross. Then, He prays, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

Do you realize or do we know that possibly the greatest roadblock to revival, the greatest roadblock to us being able to be renewed and to be able to be excited again and to be able to be fully used by God again is the lack of forgiveness among the people of God?

I believe that has plagued the New Testament church. I believe it has plagued many of God's people down through the centuries. Lack of forgiveness.

[17:16] Someone does something. Someone says something. Or we hear something that we believe is something that was meant to hurt us.

And so it hurts us. And we don't forgive. We hold a grudge. And we hold it against someone. And we don't forgive.

And it's like there's a blockage. And that free-flowing grace that goes back and forth is no longer there. And I believe that lack of forgiveness is a problem in the churches today, in the church today, because what we're seeing all over America, I believe, is people not forgiving, people not working together, people that are holding old grudges, people that are nursing old hurts, and for some, potentially even malice, that they would wish harm upon someone else because they believe they were harmed.

The church is full of petty grievances. And I don't mean just faith. I mean the body of Christ. We need to be careful that we do not fall prey to lack of forgiveness.

Is there anyone in your life that you're treating differently today because of what you feel is an affront? Do we try to avoid some people because we feel that they wronged us and we're still holding it against them?

[18:58] We have to be careful. What did Jesus pray? Father, forgive them. If Jesus, who was being put to death by the very people that were beneath his cross, how much worse could it get?

They hung him on the cross, the connecting word, then he prayed, Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do. Has anyone hurt us more than they hurt Jesus? Has anyone done anything worse to us than what they did to the God of the universe in human flesh?

No. So why can't we forgive? Well, it's the human part of us. But by God's grace, we can forgive.

This places, unforgiveness places barriers between believers. But not one of us has been wronged the way Jesus Christ was wronged on the cross of Calvary.

The reality is we can forgive. Verse 33 again, You know, there are a lot of things that people can do to us that will hurt us.

[20:24] There are a lot of things that people will say to us that will hurt us. And, you know, it's easy for us to say that, but it's difficult for us to actually carry through with it.

Because I don't know the hurt that, I don't know how you've been hurt. And I can't even begin to imagine someone who has been wronged by maybe someone taking a life of a loved one or someone intentionally hurting a loved one or hurting an individual.

How does that person forgive? You know, I think of Corrie ten Boom, who was taken captive by the Nazis, was tortured and was deprived and had lice all over and just was horribly treated.

And to hear her say to, even to her very German captors after the war that she met again, she said, I forgive you.

How could that be? How could someone do that? Or to hear someone who maybe has a child that is murdered and to say to the offender, I forgive you.

[21:41] I don't know how they can do that. But I know how God can do that. And I know how he can do it through us. And if Jesus Christ, in his most difficult hour, prayed rather than complained,

and he prayed to the Father, and he prayed for the forgiveness of the very ones who are putting him to death, I believe there shouldn't be a reason why any of us harbor a grudge, treat anyone differently because of what we feel they've done for us, to us, because lack of forgiveness will be the roadblock to revival.

Lack of forgiveness will keep barriers between us. So as we conclude, as we think about what's our takeaway, what do we get from Jesus saying on the cross, Father, forgive them?

Well, number one, come to the cross. Let's not be complacent about the cross of Calvary. And we may even use the cross maybe as an opportunity to start a conversation.

You see someone wearing a cross. Do you know what that cross means? Well, someone might even say, well, no, not really. Or they'll say, well, Jesus hung on a cross.

Or maybe that's the symbol of Christianity. Well, do you know what it means? And that might start a conversation. We need to come to the cross because that's where it all begins.

[23 : 18] Also, I believe what we see in the words of Jesus is a call to forgiveness. I believe that we can first receive that forgiveness from God, our Heavenly Father.

And for those of us who have trusted Christ as our Savior, we've already received that forgiveness when we trusted Christ as our Savior. And since He forgave us, the Bible says, so should we forgive others.

We so must forgive as well. We can forgive because we have been forgiven. Jesus hung on the cross for you and for me.

And as we march toward that final hour, that darkest day when for the span of about three hours, the sun didn't even shine, God had turned His back upon His Son because He couldn't look upon sin.

And are we not thankful that after Jesus Christ was placed in the borrowed tomb, on the third day, when the women went to the tomb, it was already empty because God was satisfied with the penalty that had been paid on the cross of Calvary.

[24 : 41] Let's pray. Lord, dear Father, I thank You for Your forgiveness. Father, I thank You that You love us so much and demonstrated Your love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

He walked that path up to Calvary. He allowed the soldiers to nail Him to the cross.

And as they lifted that cross and it came down into the hole with a thud, then, Lord, we're so thankful that Jesus prayed, Father, forgive them, showing to us that in His darkest hour, He was concerned about forgiveness, forgiving others for their sin.

So, Father, we thank You for that. We thank You that through Your grace and Your power, You can forgive through us. And, Father, if there is anyone that, any one of us, maybe is still harboring a grudge, nursing an old hurt, Father, may we not let the sin go down on that today, but, Father, may we confess it and may we make it right with that person.

So, Father, I pray that You would remove all the roadblocks for revival here at Faith. Lord, I pray that You would help us to love one another. Father, I pray that You would help us to show to the world that we are Yours because of the love we have for one another.

[26 : 30] And, Lord, I ask that You would help us to be praying, Father, do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Father, please, I pray that You would work miracles in our midst and that we would be able to see souls saved and lives changed.

I pray that You would help us to reach our neighbors with the gospel, help us to love them, help us to be able to show to them that we care. And, Lord, we thank You for what You're going to do.

And we look forward to all that You're going to accomplish for Your honor and for Your glory. For it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

Amen. As we... As we... Thank you.